

OLD FORCE-O-HABIT'S WAY

By Vincent Harper

SEPTEMBER, 1906

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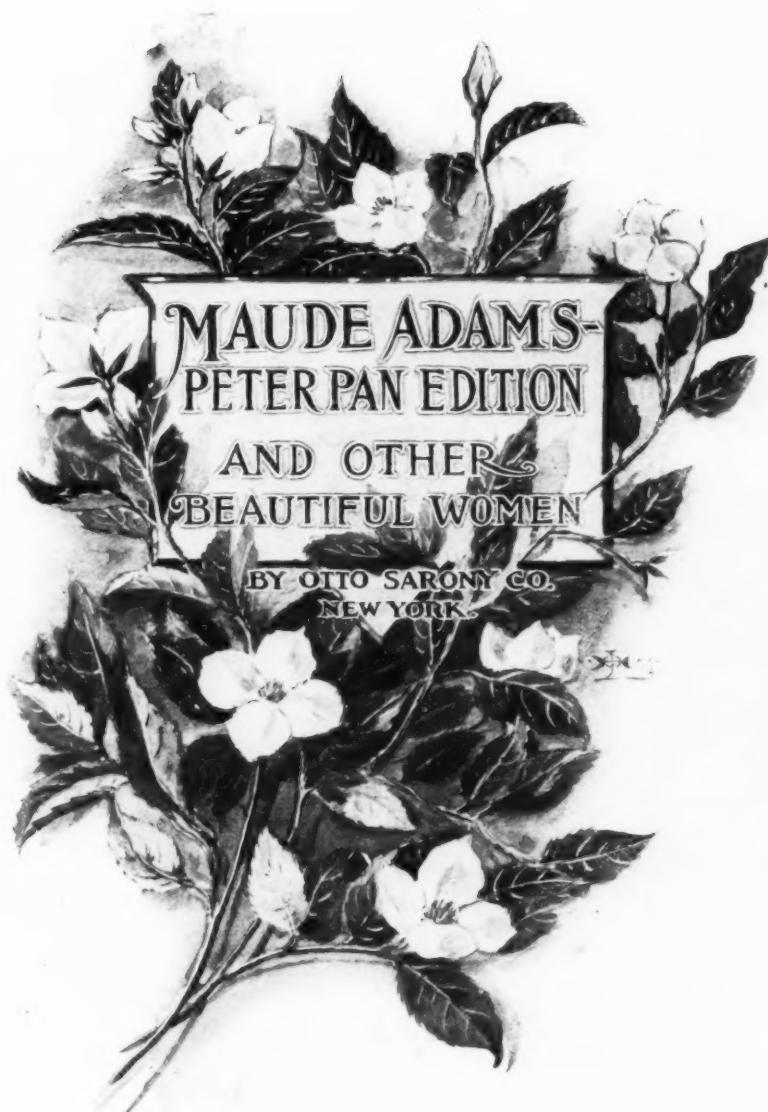
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MISS MARIE DORO



MISS LILLIAN GILLETTE



MISS GRACE ELLISTON

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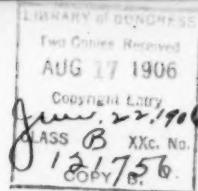
MISS TOBY CLAUDE



DRAWN BY HAROLD BETTS

Tender John stood in the doorway.

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# THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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No. 5

## A Placard at Tender John's

BY F. L. STEALEY

Tender John stood in his doorway and observed the young spring grass shine with a wondrous green under the sun slanting to the Sangre de Cristo mountains. The little Red River, for the preciousness of water there had so dignified that diminutive stream, seemed to run fitly with molten gold.

The shadows of the peaks crept down to bless the plain after the heat of day, and swept away the tinsel glitter from the little *rio* and softened its ragged and defiled banks about the camping ground at the crossing. The mud-plastered picket house on the slope above turned in the shadow from brown to gray; the deep doorway gaped darksomely like the entrance to a tarantula's hole, and Tender John, swart of skin, bloated of body, and with limbs disproportionately attenuated, leaned in it and resumed his watch for the insect crawl of wayfarers as they moved along the trail.

Freighter and emigrant raged with a thirst not to be allayed by the little Red River's blood-warm water. Usually they drank and got themselves peacefully away, seeming to absorb something of the paunchy proprietor's subdued speech and amiable gravity along with his Mexican whiskey.

That fluid of fire, however, sometimes refreshed patrons of a more exuberant humor. The scar across Tender John's none too noble expanse of brow was cut by the octagon barrel of a wielded six-shooter. The mirror behind the bar, wreathed in red and yellow tatters of tinsel, had been fractured by a .45 bullet at

a height clearing by a scant inch Tender John's bristling crown. The door was splintered inside and out by shots. The pale pine board sign above it had not escaped contemptuous defacement. On it, Tender John, with a phonetic attempt at English, had printed the word "Salun," and underneath had correctly set its equivalent, "Tendejon," in the older language of the land. But the hand of a half-drunk cowboy reaching from the saddle had broadly penciled a "By" between the two words and interpolated two letters in the last, so that the Mexican proprietor's proper patronymic had become incongruously lost in "Tender John."

On either side of the doorway, placards were tacked to the picket wall. Some were printed, some strangely and wonderfully written; some were in English, some in Spanish, others in both languages; all were headed "Reward," and pertained to stolen stock and were of interest to more than one of Tender John's patrons.

Late that afternoon, the Santa Fé coach had stopped at the door, and a fresh placard had been added to the collection. It was double the size of any there, with a long-lettered caption that caught Tender John's eyes as he stepped idly from the doorway. He stood before it, and as he read his interest quickened. Carefully detaching it from the tacks and holding it in his hand, he glanced with an apprehensive eye up and down the trail.

From either direction a dust-cloud was approaching. That one rolling down the slope from the Raton hills on the north

broke thin and straggling about the white cover of a wagon. And Tender John mentally noting the slow coming of a freighter or an emigrant who would arrive with the twilight, turned his eyes to the south.

There the dense dust-cloud rolled up rapidly and hung voluminously over the trail. No freighter from the gray city of the Holy Faith might wheel with that whirlwind speed. Shortly, the mingled beat of racing hoofs and the strike of steel spur-chains on sounding wooden stirrups came with growing loudness to his ears, and three riders took uncertain shape through the veiling dust.

Triangular-ranked, the trio bore down with a wild-goose cleaving of the air. At the front, a tall figure in huge white hat and flapping scarf soared with the stride of his horse. The shallow ford broke up about him, and with muddy trickles running from his splashed and dusty horse, he lit with a plunge before the watching Tender John.

He had dismounted and dropped his reins to trail from the bit, before Tender John's sodden brain coupled his presence with the handbill, which he forthwith crumpled in his tremulous paw. But the eyes of the rider were on him as he warily backed within and shambled around behind the bar.

"Never mind the tarantula juice—it won't spile for waitin'," said the cowboy facetiously at Tender John's prompt production of bottle and glasses. "Let's have a look first at that there paper, *señor*, I seen you fingerin' when I rid up. Blamed if I ain't kinder curious to know if it is your will you been a-makin'."

His humor was fully appreciated by Tender John. Backed before the mirror, he bent with suavity. It was a scrap not worthy of the perusal of his patron. It was, moreover, in the language Mexican. And then, at the movement of an impatient hand to an armed hip, the crumpled paper fell from his thin, shaking fingers on the bar.

The cowboy took it up and faced to the door as his two followers entered. Both of them were Mexicans, and it was for their enlightenment that he read it aloud, with a free translation and a commentary

of reckless pleasantry addressed to himself.

"Hello! what's this here!" he cried, with well-acted rant of surprise before Tender John's furtive eyes. "'Reward for the apprehension of one Herk Dankin!' Blamed if they ain't makin' a mistake in their highfalutin' Mexican. I ain't never done nothin' but maverick a bunch o' Pecos River dogies—'ceptin' that scrap at Glorieta, and the blame greaser there had his knife out for me! Hm—hm, 'blue eyes and red, curling hair—' I never knowed before I was such a purty man. Reckon that's why they want to see me so bad down in Santa Fé."

His tone was careless enough, but his hand carefully smoothed out the crumpled sheet, and, folding it, he deposited it in his hip pocket and turned his eyes on his two companions:

"Say, Felipe, Hilario, don't you want to make a stake?—only I 'low it would be mostly took up for your funeral!" And he significantly touched the ivory handle of the sixshooter that slewed his cartridge belt over his right hip.

Hilario and Felipe shook their shaggy, dusty heads, grinned in dull admiration, and ranged up to the bar. "An' here's to the man with sand for that there apprehension!" proposed Dankin, lifting his drink; and the pariah pair clinked jokingly their own brimming glasses against his, and gulped the burning contents down their brazen throats.

Herk had brought the thimble-full to his lips when, glancing in the mirror, he caught the reflection of a reproving apparition at his back. It was Tender John's daughter who stood silently behind him in the inner doorway of the room. A little red shawl was thrown over her head and gathered with one hand under her chin to frame the oval of her face. And with the glow of her shawl and the glow of her face, she warmed Tender John's dim picket dungeon like a cactus bloom plucked from the passionate sunshine.

Herk set down his drink untasted and turned about to face her.

"Hello, Florita!" he said, with careless intonation and a little familiar nod of his great-brimmed hat.

As in many Mexican houses of the lower class, a mud-plastered wall, waist-high,



DRAWN BY HAROLD BETTS

He lit before Tender John

projected at right angles from the doorway a few feet into the room. To the secluded space behind it each advanced, she with the noiselessness of little slippers feet gliding along the smooth dirt floor, he striding in high-heeled boots with gallant clinking of spur-bells.

She was the quicker, and securing herself in the shadow behind the low wall, leaned with one arm on it—making of it at once a coquettish division and connection between them—and began her silken, murmurous Spanish. Herk, full in the light with his tall figure planted diagonally across the doorway, listened and playfully blew cigaret smoke in her face. But in Tender John's perch, Tender John's furtive habit fell on him, and all the while his eyes went from Florita's face up and down the trail.

The covered wagon, described by the proprietor, had rolled down the Raton slope and was approaching the crossing. Herk saw it slide, with creaking of locked wheels, down the hill; but before it reached the ford it turned from the trail and wheeled across the narrow bottom above, with the rough-haired head and bearded face of its driver projecting from under the front bow as he glanced about for a camping-place for the night. It stopped at a little distance, near the low fringe of willows along the bank of the *rio*; and Herk witnessed with indolent interest the unharnessing of the team and the pleasurable roll of the sweat-encrusted mules, that, on being released, turned bleached bellies and shining-shod hoofs ludicrously to the sky.

The driver, busy arranging his camp, had disappeared on the opposite side of the wagon. Presently a little smoke arose there and hung about the dingy, dusty cover, and then spread, thinning, upward against the red sunset; and through its film the driver reappeared, coming down to the crossing.

All feet coming this way had but one goal. Herk leisurely straightened himself up in the doorway to admit the stranger. The two were of the like goodly stature, and their limbs and bodies antagonistically brushed in the narrow doorway as the stranger none too gently thrust himself

through. A spark lit the cowboy's eye, and he shuffled his spurs in a game-cock strut.

The stranger halted somewhat confusedly before the bar. To him, all faces there were foreign, and he looked dubiously from one to another. His hesitating hand ran down in the hip pocket of his overalls and drew forth a small bottle with a rubber stopper. Holding it up before Tender John, whom he recognized as the presiding genius of the place, he said: "Milk—that's what I want. But blamed if I know what you call it in this here Mexican lingo," he added, with a sweep of his long arm indicating all in the room.

Tender John, not comprehending, shook his head with an interrogating smile and turned toward the cowboy for interpretation.

"What sort o' josh is the blamed mule-skinner givin' us?" cried Herk, and burst into a taunting roar. But it was lost on the stranger, who caught only the welcome sound of his own language and turned with fraternal feeling showing in his surprised face. Before he could speak, however, he was interrupted by Florita, who, with a knowing little squeak, flashed out from the shadow, plucked the bottle from his hand and fled with it through the inner doorway.

"Why, what in hell!"—Herk Dankin broke out; but the stranger, gazing in admiration after the small-slipped Spanish Cinderella, cut him short.

"There ain't nothin' like a woman when a feller's in trouble; white or yaller, they're all the same!" he said, emphatically. In huge relief, his knotted hand descended and made the bar tremble.

"Set 'em up, old horse-fly!" he exclaimed to Tender John. "Set 'em up for all hands."

Tender John needed no translation of that. The glasses spun along in a double row, the bottle tipped from hand to hand; and Herk Dankin, whimsically debating whether to shoot the stranger full of holes or shower on him the graces of his friendship, pensively did justice to his drink.

The empty glasses were set down in disarray. Herk, glancing at them, nodded silently to Tender John, who promptly plunged them in a bucket of Red River's

muddy water, and again they spun, dripping and dotting little wet rings, orderly, along the pine-board bar.

"This 'n's on me," Herk remarked to the stranger.

The latter filled and nodded cordially. "Them words o' your'n has a sort o' sweet sound," he said, "for blamed if I ain't tired o' this here everlastin', outlandish Mexican lingo! But this here won't never do—I must be gittin' back to camp."

His tone was that of severe self-reproach, but his unaccustomed head was not proof against two successive shocks of Tender John's liquid lightning.

"I'm a rainbelter, but I ain't busted," he continued, producing a buckskin sack somewhat ostentatiously from his pocket. "I sold my cows pretty well, if I did give my dry ranch away. I've got relations down about Fort Union, and I 'low to git land somewhere's 'round there."

He poured a heap of coins in his hollowed hand and fingered them over for silver to settle his score. The eyes of the two Mexican riders were focussed on the big gold pieces, and as they were returned to their owner's pocket the jackal pair looked to their lion for permission to prey. But Herk gave no sign. He only remarked carelessly to the stranger: "You can put up your dust, Kansas; I'm a-runnin' this shebang."

In contradiction of his words, Florita, just then re-entering, bestowed on him a conquering glance, and presented to the stranger the bottle filled with milk. The rainbelter, in grateful acknowledgment, dropped a silver dollar into her hand. But she laughingly shook it back into his own, and, turning, flitted out of sight into some mysterious inner precinct of Tender John's abode.

Herk stood alone in the doorway and watched the stranger stride swiftly back to his camp. Behind him, at the dim bar, rose the incessant soft babble of the Mexicans. Mostly it fell meaninglessly on his ears, but now and then a more energetically uttered word he caught and frowned disquietingly.

Tender John had a fondness for the dark. No lights were yet lit within; but without there were pastoral signs of the

fall of night. The bawling of the milk cows' calves, penned throughout the scorching day, came poignantly from the picket corral on the slope; and Tender John's Mexican cows, with answering lows, were stringing from the water to the barway. Their long horns, their little lean shapes, their nondescript colors, struck on the cowboy evoking an unwonted contempt. "Blame a greaser, anyhow!" he energetically muttered.

And, springing into the saddle, he rode across the intervening bottom to where the campfire of the American flashed its cheery invitation.

At his coming, the rainbelter rose from his crouching position by the fire. "Git down off 'n your horse," he said, in hospitable greeting, while the cowboy, from the saddle, ran his quick eyes over the camp. Between the wagon and the fire, a little pen had been built of the up-tilted wagon-seat and the camper's grimy boxes; and inside of it he beheld a creeping baby striving indefatigably to effect an escape.

His eyes searched about the fire and wagon, but failing to discover the usual attendant figure in calico gown and gingham sunbonnet, his glance returned and rested in redoubled surprise upon the struggling baby.

"I've got to keep him corralled that way," said the father, apologetically, noting the other's gaze. "He's jest plumb stuck on the fire—but all babies is built that way, I reckon."

Herk dismounted and squatted on his heels.

"Blamed if he don't butt his head into every crack in that there corral jest like a Texas yearlin'!" he admiringly commented. "I'll gamble now, Kansas, he makes you more trouble on the trail than a whole herd o' dogies?"

"Oh, he ain't no trouble," replied the rainbelter quickly. "Only about his hair. His maw would n't 'low it to be cut off—and somehow I ain't had no heart to. She was always sorter puny after he come," he added, as if in palliation of this sentimental softness. "An' she was sorter skeery o' the mountains, an' before we got to them, she jest let loose all holts." And having thus compassed the tragedy of the trail in one Homeric sentence, he bent to

the exigencies of life and gave his attention to the two frying-pans that on either hand smoked with slapjack and sliced salt-pork.

Presently he withdrew them from the fire, uprighted the wagon-seat on its springs for a table, and placed a grimy box before it as a seat for Herk. Seating himself on another, he held the baby, released from the dismembered corral. The tin-cup of milk was taken from the coals and placed on the table, and the baby made an animated struggle for the spoon as he was fed. Herk ate, and looked on with an appreciative eye. And thus the rainbelter entertained an angel unawares, whose invisible wing was thrown over the little camp now darkening under the purple sky.

"Don't be snatched, pardner," said the rainbelter when finally Herk rose.

"Oh, I don't 'low to eat and run," conventionally returned the cowboy, and leisurely made and lit his cornhusk cigaret. He had determined to wait for the moon to rise. It was now on the wane and would rise late, but its brightness would make his presence needless throughout the after night. His horse, with bridle reins trailing, circled within the campfire's light and cropped at the short grass. The glint of silver at the brow-band of the bridle caught the baby's sleepy eyes until his head fell at last on his father's breast and he was deposited on the blankets spread beside the wagon's near wheel. Covering him, the father turned to the fire again.

Herk was squatted by it, his right forefinger drawing furrowed lines in the dust. "Now, here's the way your trail goes tomorrow," he said, and the rainbelter bent down beside him and gazed at the rude chart of his road growing in the firelight.

"This here's Coloraydo," said Herk, his finger marking off an indefinite square to the north. "And here's the Raton."

"And whereabouts is our camp?" asked the wayfarer.

"Oh, you've got south across the line into this here god-forsaken Mexico," replied Herk, with the old inhabitant's laconic scorn of the superfluous "New." "And here's the Red River where you are now, and here's the Vermejo where you'll git tomorrer. And, Kansas, let me give you a pointer, this here country is jest the stampin'-ground of rustlers—greasers and

sech," he interjected with ingenuous candor, "and you'd better stand guard over them mules!"

He lifted his eyes in his earnestness and fixed them on the rainbelter's face. His hand was raised and waved to the bottom above, where the mules were feeding unseen along the low line of willows, when, it seemed on the instant, a confirmation of his warning was blown from their trumpeting nostrils, and immediately there followed the plunge of hoofs as the animals broke into a lively stampede across the bottom, for the bluff.

Their alert owner was quicker even than the cowboy. "Blame their skittish hearts! What's a-skeerin' of them now?" he exclaimed, giving an upward spring that brought him in contact with the rising cowboy and set Herk tottering on his high heels. "I'll round 'em in!" he cried, already half-way to the saddle horse before the cowboy was firmly balanced on his feet. He mounted, and, guided by the fainting beat of hoofs borne down from the bluff, clattered off in the night, calling back over his cantle in anxious afterthought, "I say, pardner, you tend the baby!"

"Well, I'll be blamed!" ejaculated Herk Dankin, and let fall his eyes somewhat shamefacedly to the blankets. The baby, aroused by the voices and the clatter of hoofs, had kicked off the cover and was a wide-awake participant of the excitement. "I reckon he'll jest hump hisself now," Herk muttered, glancing down at him uneasily. But he neither whined nor whimpered, but looked Herk boldly in the eye.

"Blamed if he ain't built for a cowboy!" exclaimed Herk, stooping over the blankets. With nothing of awkwardness or constraint in his manner, he gathered up the pink-slipped bundle and seated himself on the box by the fire.

"I always did love little babies," he confided to the staring one on his knee, holding its tiny hand in his own great one, covered with red hair, soft and broad as a mountain lion's paw with like might of muscle to back it. "You 're white, you are," he declared suddenly. "You ain't goin' to give a feller away. Shake." He took the baby's hand with whimsical grav-



DRAWN BY HAROLD BETTS

"Here I am a-tendin' this here baby.

ity, inspired by a sudden thought of the reward and the knowledge that of all the hands in the world that tiny one alone he could be sure was not against him. But his pity was not for himself. "You pore little weanlin'!" he ran on, "a-strayin' 'round on this big range without no maw! If I had a shack and a corral somewhere, blamed if I would n't maverick you." He lowered his voice in earnestness and the baby looked up understandingly into his face.

A stentorian shout from the bluff scattered his sentimentality. "There's Kansas a-whoopin'!" he exclaimed in an altered tone, vainly endeavoring to penetrate the darkness. "Blamed if I did n't plumb forgit him! I reckon old Tender John's tangle-foot is shore riz into my head. But I was always gone on these little babies—more 'n the women. There ain't nothin' in this here great big world sweet'er 'n a little baby. And now, I reckon you'd better be shuttin' up them eyes." And he put his flaming mustache against the baby's cheek and rocked his great shoulders forward and back.

But the baby opened his eyes wider at the crack of a pistol shot coming with startling distinctness from the bluff. Herk leaned forward eagerly. He saw quick flashes come and go like fire-flies' light in the blank blackness there, and the reports that reached him came in rapid rolling cadence.

"By gad, Kansas is shore makin' a fight for them!" he exclaimed. "I might 'a' knowed old Hilario done that stam-pedin'. I wonder if Felipe's there too? Well, I reckon Kansas can stand both them rustlers off." He burst into a loud laugh regardless of the baby's stare. "And he's got my horse and a-poppin' away at them with the shootin'-iron in the holster on my saddle! And them Mexicans a-mule-stealin' 'lowed it was me that rid off!" He jingled his spurs at the joke. "And here I am a-tendin' this here baby. I 'low I'd better git him to sleep and drap him on his blankets so's I can take a hand in this here game myself."

He resumed his rocking, with a sidewise shake of laughter half-repressed for fear of further arousing his charge.

The fire had died down. The camp

was in darkness except for the rounded pile of coals that made a glowing ring in the night. And by it Herk's crouching figure huddled, on the low box, unrecognizably shapeless.

No further disturbance came from the bluff. The baby had closed his eyes at last, and Herk rose with him on his arm, pushing together with his foot the ends of the partly burnt sticks that their blaze might light him to the blankets. As he did so there was the windlike rush of moccasin feet behind him, and the lightning flash of a glistening knife that, aimed for the vital spot between the shoulders, descended, with his movement, lower down in his back, while a hand, missing his throat, seized on his shoulder.

"Hell!" he snarled, twisting unsteadily in that violent grip. With the sound of his voice he felt himself instantly released, and, clasping the baby tightly, he cleared the smoking fire with a leap, alighting on his feet and wheeling to face his assailant, his sixshooter drawn and ready for action in his hand.

At that instant the fire blazed up and showed him the Mexican, Felipe. He stood stupidly, holding out his empty hand from which the knife had dropped at Herk's exclamation. But it was not fright that fixed him before the levelled sixshooter. Even at that acute moment, Herk saw the shock of horror, and surprise at his mistake, showing in his ferocious face, and knew that his assault had no connection with the handbill; and a curious feeling of pride that this half-savage follower was faithful still to him rendered Herk merciful.

"Why, you blame blind fool!" he cried. "Now you light out o' here." He made a motion with his weapon and the Mexican leaped aside on noiseless moccasins.

Herk stood erect, feeling only the clinging pressure of the frightened baby, until he had seen the Mexican mix indistinguishably with the shadows beyond the circle of the fire. Then a hot gush down his back accompanied by a paralyzing pain made him aware of the knife-thrust. "Blamed if I ain't done up!" he muttered, and staggered back to the box and slid from it to the ground.

The baby, to whom he had held fast,

was by now thoroughly aroused, and began to cry. Somehow Herk got him to the blankets; and, sidling to the near wagon-wheel, he turned and sat with his back braced against it, close beside his charge.

A night hawk boomed its jarring note overhead, startling the baby into silence and giving Herk the chill fancy that his soul was slipping from him on like stealthy wings.

"I lowed to stand night-guard here till moonrise," he murmured to himself. The campfire becoming strangely dim to his eyes, he groped with his hand for the baby. There was protection in his movement; there was also the clinging instinct of the helpless, and Herk was tranquillized and saw with clearer vision as he held that equally helpless little hand.

Slowly the fire burned itself out. There ensued a dragging interval of darkness during which he sat with his eyes fixed on the Sangre de Cristo mountains that he might see the first light of the moon strike on the peaks. Those ethereal summits were beginning to glimmer lustrosly when he heard the first far-off beat of hoofs.

"Kansas is comin', and I 'low I'll soon be goin'—across the Range," he whispered, his eyes still fixed on the mountains.

The nearing hoofs beat down from the bluff. The mules circled close and snorted. The rider, coming up behind them, dismounted, and his heavy footfall approached the fire. He built it up and turned to Herk.

"Is he 'sleep, pardner?" he asked, his rough voice lowered.

And then as the blaze burst out he saw Herk motionless, propped against the wagon-wheel, in a pool of blood.

"Why, what's this here mean?" he cried. "Them Mexicans—"

"Mistook me for a better man," was the muttered answer. "It's all right, Kansas; where 'd that baby be if Felipe 'd got you?"

And seein' 'twas him done it, it makes a stand-off, I reckon, for that greaser at Glorieta. But I ain't got but a minute. Look here."

He had drawn forth the handbill from his hip-pocket, and now held it out open in his hand. Stained with blood, the long letters of the "Reward" were clearly distinct in the fire light. The rainbeler took the sheet and stared at its unknown words. "I can't read this here Mexican," he said. "But I heered about this Dankin on the road. Are you him?"

Herk nodded. He laid his hand on the baby's again. "You witness," he said, "I was took by him. There ain't nary man in this god-forsaken country could 'a' done it face to face." His voice, raised in semi-savage pride, fell off in little spurts. "And you git that money—and buy him a little bunch o' dogies—when you git the land."

"Not by a damn sight!" exclaimed the rainbeler. "No blood money in mine ner his 'n." And crumpling it in his hand, he threw the red-stained sheet upon the fire.

Dankin watched it burn with an eye at peace. Its impalpable ashes were borne off on the night wind; and he slid down on the blankets.

The rainbeler stooped over him. "This here's a case for a woman's tendin'," he said, strong in his faith in woman's efficacy. "S'posen, pardner, I light out for that little Mexican girl yonder?"

Herk shook his head, and, reaching out, closed his fingers around the baby's hand. Perhaps at the approach of dissolution something of childhood stirred within him, for he smiled and told off on the baby's tiny fingers:

"This 'n' gits my horse, and this 'n' gits my saddle—bridle—spurs—quirt—"

His voice broke weakly; and with an effort bringing the baby's hand to his lips so sealed his will bequeathing all his cowboy property.

# The Capitulation of Cheston

BY LEFA FIELD HUBBELL

Josephine rose from the table, and walking to the port-hole looked out across the immaculate white deck to the rippling surf beating against the dull gold of the sandy shore.

"Here, at last," she said, addressing no one in particular of the little group around the table. "Four days from Cebu, and we have n't seen anything but a sporadic sprinkling of islands in a deluge of water! I wish we could see an alligator, by way of diversion."

She was the only woman on board the Coast Guard *Mindanao*, and the ship had anchored in the little bay, on the east coast of Sulu, where she was to be stationed in the interests of the educational department, and where, besides the captain of constabulary and his lieutenant (both dining on the *Mindanao*, by invitation of the ship's officers), she would be the only American until her assistant should come.

Captain Cheston, of the Philippine Constabulary, primed with a good dinner and surfeited with ice-water, was in a somewhat better mood than usual, which, however, by the greatest stretch of the most generous imagination, could not be called good humor. He always felt a momentary elation when a coast guard called in at his port with a goodly supply of well-cooked food on board and a hearty invitation for him to partake of it. Stationed in the South Philippines, far from what little civilization the islands boast, is bad enough, but being stationed in a little out-of-the-way post in the Sulu group, not sufficiently near even Jolo to be able to get commissaries from there, and where government supply boats touch only by accident—and then only when, upon the rarest of occasions, an inspector or other government employé is destined for the port—is a severe test for even the greatest amount of patience; and patience is something Captain Cheston had never been burdened with.

Captain Cheston hated women—he said; but one could scarcely blame him; his enforced mode of living would conduce

toward making anyone hate anything. He not only hated women, but he had not a high regard for a superfluity of his own sex. He was rather inclined to think that there was but one person in all the world who was, in every particular, worthy of his Maker, and that person was none other than Captain Philip Cheston. He never went out of his way to be agreeable to men, and if he ever spoke a civil word to a woman it was unintentional; he had a most gigantic and volatile contempt for anything that smacked of femininity. Women, he said, were about as capable of sane judgment and clear conception as are crabs and porcupines; and there were other similarities between women and these animals which, he said, he would refrain from mentioning, out of consideration for the latter.

"I do hope," he declared to the regimental commander, one day, when they were crossing the Pacific, "that I'll be assigned to a post where there are no driveling idiots called women school-teachers." And when he arrived at his station, some fifty miles from Jolo, on the Sulu Sea, he was allowed to revel in the solitary companionship of one lieutenant, and bask in the sunshine of his own conceit. When, one later day, his lieutenant calmly announced that he was engaged, and that he was thinking of marrying and bringing his bride down to the little post, as a guard against insanity, the captain sputtered his fury in indignant and strenuous refusals to allow him to bring a woman into the town. Forest sighed—and smiled. Some time later, a coast-plying commercial steamer dropped anchor in the bay, and the master of the ship imparted the news that Captain Cheston's post was to be graced with a school teacher, maybe two school teachers. The captain pricked up his ears, like an alert colt sniffing danger, and considered the thing.

"Two Americans in a post are enough," he said, waxing refractory. "I don't want any think-I-know-it-all cads about me. I won't have them."



DRAWN BY GUSTAVUS C. WIDNEY

"Don't you know there are no alligators outside America?"

"But these are women," he was told. "Two of them—one apiece for you."

"Women!" he gasped, and fell back in his chair in a towering rage. "Who dared send women school-teachers down here to my post? I'd as soon have a nest of hornets in my hat as one woman in my post; but two—!"

One of them—Josephine—had the presumption to come, shortly after, on the *Mindanao*. The ship's captain had asked the post officers to dine on board, and Captain Cheston, in secret rage, was placed next Josephine at table, where he sat, for three-quarters of an hour, studiously avoiding her eyes and ignoring her remarks, while she chatted and laughed with Lieutenant Forest and the ship's officers. The captain was determined he would not notice her or give her the slightest excuse for conversation, but when she uttered the positively inane wish to see an alligator, he could contain himself no longer. Such drivel! Such imbecility! And to think that he was expected to put

up with it for two endless years! Thank heaven, she had served a year of her time in Cebu, before coming down to Sulu. He hoped to heaven she would get sick and have to be taken away before she got well started on her remaining two years.

"I don't see, for the life of me, how the government can have the nerve to send women down here to teach, who don't know the difference between alligators and crocodiles," he snorted, pushing his *crème de menthe* away with a quick, impatient gesture, as he turned toward her belligerently. "Don't you know, young woman, that there are no alligators outside of America?"

"No," she replied, in surprise, glancing across at Forest, who suppressed a sympathetic sigh. "I certainly do not. I have heard people talking about alligators ever since I came to the Philippines; but I've never seen one."

"Well, I guess not," he snapped. "The people you've heard talking about alligators in the Philippines were fools—idiots!"

I don't care who they were. The Asiatic saurian is called a crocodile; alligator is the American Indian name for the species of saurian that inhabits America." And he gulped down the last drop of emerald fluid in his glass.

"Oh!" exclaimed Josephine, smiling "So that is the difference, is it?" She came back and took the vacant chair beside him. "I've always heard there was a difference—something about the alligator, or the crocodile, having sockets for his teeth to fit into, and the other not; and one of them being able to move his upper jaw, and the other not. I never could remember which is which, without seeing them both."

"Then why do you talk about them, if you don't know what you're talking about? One should n't make indiscriminate use of words. I am one of the men who never say things without knowing whereof I speak," he said, punctuating his words with an energetic tap of a long, lank finger on a hard substance in the breast pocket of his khaki coat. He fumbled nervously with the brass button for a moment, and then extracted a small red book, marked "Pocket Dictionary" "I never passed over a word in my life that I did not know the exact meaning of, without going immediately and looking it up. I claim that a good dictionary, or an encyclopædia, is education enough for any man. I am never without this little book for ready reference, and I claim that it has been the means of my knowing as much as, if not more than, the average man."

"Or woman?" put in Josephine, maliciously.

"Or woman!" was the splenetic rejoinder, and a cynical curl of Cheston's lips was a further signal of hostility. "What does a woman know? Probably enough to make her think she can instil civilization into the island savages; but I say that woman is not endowed with the proper qualifications for knowing things; she has n't the inherent, knowledge-seeking propensity of man. She has been petted and pampered too long."

Josephine was rather amused. She glanced toward the ship's captain, sitting at the head of the table, sipping his cordial. (He had been telling her about

Cheston, all the way down from Cebu.)

"You are the most ungallant man I ever met, Captain Cheston," she said, pleasantly, as he deliberately took up a cigar and lighted it. "What has my sex ever done to you? We are not so bad, after all. Really, we are awfully forgiving—we are horribly worthy."

"Humph! Listen to the extravagances—the things women say!" he stormed, puffing at his cigar viciously and blowing the smoke in her direction, as he glared at the white enameled wall across her shoulder. 'Awfully' forgiving! 'Horribly' worthy! Did you ever hear a man make such preposterous statements? I say that the woman never lived that knew, half the time, what she was talking about."

"Oh, you are mistaken," Josephine returned, smiling with evident determination not to be angered. "We only say those things to be effective, you know."

"Effective!" he scoffed. "I'd like to see the woman that could have any effect upon me. Effective!" He grunted a sort of hollow laugh that had no note of mirth, but whose quick, downward inflection carried with it a world of withering contempt. "And do you call that effective?"

He rose from his chair and walked out upon the deck, without a word, and stood for a full minute looking over the rail, with an air of one so utterly disgusted that there was no room for comment.

Josephine sighed, martyr-like; but there was something in her eyes that told the old sea-captain beside her she was not the one to lay down the scepter and evacuate the throne in an ignominious retreat.

Presently Cheston turned swiftly on his heel and motioned for his lieutenant, who, as he left the saloon, flashed Josephine a glance of peculiar significance.

"You're in for it," the captain of the coast guard told her, as he cast a meaning look towards Cheston's rather manly shoulders. "I told you what you were coming to. You see, I was not exaggerating. I've known Cheston for years. He was always peculiar, but the climate has treated him a little worse than it has the rest of us. Still, he is n't a bad sort of fellow, back home. I don't mind giving you a tip; he has vowed he won't have a woman at the post."

"How is he going to help himself?" Josephine inquired calmly, with no resentment in her tone, nor anxiety either. "It seems to me that I'm as much an employé of the government as he is, and that my orders come from very nearly the same source."

"Yes; but if you ask for a transfer, you'll get it."

"But I don't intend to."

"He says you will—sooner or later."

"Does he?" The creaking of hawsers was audible, and there was a shuffling of feet around the hold. "Have you sent my things ashore yet?"

"Everything except you. The ship's boat is waiting. But don't you think you'd better stay on board till morning? We won't pull out till noon tomorrow."

"Thank you, no. I have n't the least idea how I'll find things, and I'm anxious to get into my boxes."

The old sailor pressed her hand warmly in farewell and expressed his sympathy for her, as she ran lightly down the steps into the little row-boat which was to take her to her future home.

"Don't worry about me," she called back confidently. "I don't wear a dictionary in my waistcoat pocket, and I have n't a great deal of respect for a man who does. Hurry and bring my assistant down, captain," she laughed back at him. "When she comes, I'll have reinforcements, you see."

"If she gets into Manila on the *Sherman* we'll bring her next trip."

Josephine seated herself comfortably in the little boat and waved her hand back to him as she neared the beach.

"That poor girl!" he said, pityingly, to the chief officer; "he'll make her life miserable. It's too bad! The only American woman in the place, too."

Josephine's assistant, Ethel Page, came two weeks later. When Josephine met her, there was a wistful sort of troubled shadow in the girl's eyes, but Josephine's handclasp was warm and welcoming.

"The things I've heard about the atrocities heaped upon you!" Ethel exclaimed, looking Josephine over to make sure she was all there and none the worse for wear. "Why! I am prepared for anything. But this beautiful beach! This is gorgeous, is n't it? I'll come out here and bathe, this very evening."

"No, the tide will be low this evening, and we can't go out, but we'll come in the morning; it is beautiful then. But, tell me, what did you hear?"

Ethel threw up her hands in horror. "Oh, terrible things! That you were living on rice and *commotes*; that you could n't get a chicken or an egg in the place, and when one accidentally did stray in, the captain claimed it; that, with the Sulu



DRAWN BY GUSTAVUS C. WIDNEY

Ethel stood on the coral reef.

Sea full of fish, you could n't get a single native to catch them for you; that there was no supply boat touching here, no laundrymen, mail only once a month, miserable drinking-water, and that you had to boil every drop of it; that the place is alive with giant boa-constrictors, enormous spiders, deadly scorpions, and horrible centipedes; that cholera has a way of visiting here, regularly, semi-annually; that you could n't get a house to live in until you thought of buying one; that the com-

manding officer of the post is aggressive and a brute, and his sub. the victim of military discipline; that there is a regular feud between you and the captain, and—”

Ethel had to stop for want of breath.

Josephine laughed. “Well, considering the fact that we don’t have communication with the outside world oftener than once a month, it is astonishing how news flies; for it is all true, every word of it.”

“Great heavens! Is it?” Ethel gasped, glancing helplessly about. “I denied every word of it; said it could n’t possibly be so, or you would n’t stay here. You don’t really mean that all those terrible things could be in one little place like this?”

“Don’t I? You wait and see.”

The next morning, Ethel stood on the coral reef, wriggling her pretty little pink toes, in their leather sandals, among the many-pronged branches of delicate coral which, massed together in an intricate *mélange* of shells and star-fishes and desiccated verdure, formed a reef jutting from Josephine’s little *nipa* house out into the Sulu Sea. On her head was a dainty white linen sun-bonnet, and in her hand she held an odd, lace-like, cornucopia-shaped thing which seemed to be made of spun glass and thickly frosted, or it might be some exquisite triumph of the snow-and-mist god—airy flakes of fairy moisture caught into fanciful pattern and crystallized into enduring substance. The sea-foam glittered on its point-lace walls, and the sun made the drops of water glisten and sparkle like a string of precious jewels dripping from the fragile thing.

Beside Ethel stood Josephine, tall and majestic, quaintly beautiful, with eyes that looked far out across the sea toward the rising sun, and with sensitive lips—framed in mischievous dimples—that quivered with sentient nostalgia.

“What is this?” Ethel asked, holding the beautiful, frail thing up in the rosy sunlight. “What is it, Josephine? It looks as if it might be some fantastic coral growth.”

Josephine turned her back reluctantly upon the eastern horizon, where the alchemist sun was swiftly turning the tossing waves into molten gold.

“Why, it’s a Venus Basket!” she exclaimed, with a note of interest. “I used to see lots of them in Cebu. They are found in only one place in the world, you know, and only during one month in the year—June. Beautiful thing, is n’t it?”

“It certainly is,” agreed Ethel, examining the delicate structure curiously. “So this is a Venus Basket! Then this must be what I heard Captain Cheston talking about on the boat yesterday, when I came. He said he was going to hire natives to dive for them; that he had promised to send some to a university back home. He said it was a kind of sponge that grew—”

“A sponge!” Josephine exclaimed. “He got that out of the dictionary. The dictionary calls it a *euplectella speciosa*, and classes it with the sponges; but for once the dictionary is wrong. It is no more a sponge than Captain Cheston is. Not half so much, I should say, by the way he absorbs information; he literally sops it up. He is the most stupendous egotist I ever saw; he thinks he knows a ponderous lot.”

“I suppose you would n’t mind telling him so,” bantered Ethel.

“I already have,” Josephine announced. “That is why the Philippine constabulary and the educational department are at odds here in Sulu—or this part of it. He thinks he owns the island and that he is going to make me leave. He also has some sort of a wild idea that because he knows a lot about military tactics, he is better qualified to teach Moro children than I am, and he will tell me all about it. But I don’t think so. Furthermore, I don’t think the man knows half that he even professes to, and I believe I could bluff him out of even thinking so himself, if I had a fair chance; but the old bear won’t talk to me. If he has anything to say to me he sends his orderly.”

She scrutinized the Venus Basket minutely, as together they walked back through the shallow water towards the beach. “I wonder why every Venus Basket has a dead insect inside of it? I have often wondered. They are mysterious little things, and I’d like to know something about them.”

“It is too bad,” Ethel lamented, feeling sorry for herself and thinking of the long

days of exile before her. "Here we are, two lonely American girls on this little island, not even near enough to Jolo to know what is going on in the outside world, only a stone's throw from the 'wild man of Borneo,' only two Americans besides ourselves in the place—and you had to go and quarrel with them! The captain would n't be so bad, if he was n't such an impossible old crabbed bear. I mean, he is n't at all bad looking. What is the lieutenant like?"

"He is n't a bit like the captain," Josephine replied, smiling.

"Maybe he'll come to our rescue," Ethel suggested, hopefully. "If he does n't—well, we'll die of loneliness."

"I don't care if we do," Josephine replied, curtly. "I won't let Captain Cheston think that because he says a spade is a hoe I shall proceed to call it that for the rest of my days. He may be commanding officer of the post—and he has certainly done everything he could think of to give me to understand that he is—but I am not his subordinate, and I don't intend to be treated as if I were. When he apologizes to me, my opinion of him may change for the better, if he hurries about it; if he does n't, it will keep on falling."

"But, Josephine, dear, he is the commanding officer of the post, you know," insisted Ethel gloomily, "and if we don't give in to him he can make it awfully uncomfortable for us. I'm—actually, I'm hungry, and the only prospect I see of getting anything to eat is through the commanding officer. How did it all start, anyway?" she asked, wondering how any man could be antagonistic towards Josephine.

"He boasted that he would not have a woman school-teacher in his post, and said that if one came he'd get rid of her, if he had to make it so uncomfortable for her that she'd leave of her own volition."

"Did he attempt to?"

Josephine smiled. "He certainly did. When I landed on the beach—it was at night, too—if I had n't brought my two servants with me from Cebu I'd have had to bring up my own things. Lieutenant Forest sent an orderly down to help me, and the captain countermanded the order

and called the man back. Then I could n't find any place to stay. The captain told me, not too politely, that there was no empty house in town. Lieutenant Forest, in direct disobedience of his superior officer's command, turned his place over to me for the night. In the morning I found a vacant house, but was informed, by the captain, that the constabulary had rented it to store commissaries in. Upon further inquiry I discovered that was not true."

"Then he deliberately prevaricated, to keep you from getting it?"

"Well, in fact, yes; but he went that day to see about renting it. Perhaps his conscience hurt him."

"Did he get it?"

"Yes, temporarily. But after he had made all arrangements to take it, I bought it, and, in the morning, served notice for him to vacate. I found out, also, that the building he was occupying as quarters could be purchased reasonably, and I bought that too; and the next day Mr. Captain's rent was doubled."

Ethel refrained from comment.

"But what shall we do?" she finally asked. "We'll never be able to get a favor from them, and I don't see where in the world else we are going to get anything to eat—"

"But there's nothing in the commissary. They have n't any more than we have, for that matter. Mr. Forest told me so, and I heard the captain storming around yesterday because his supplies did not come on the coast guard, when you did."

"It is really a terrible situation to be in—"

"Oh, I don't know," Josephine doubted, affecting unconcern. "I rather like it; it is certainly interesting. Besides, it is so radically different from what I expected, that I think it really a piquant position to be in. From what I had read in the papers back home, about school-teachers being gobbled up and married by the American army officers, whether they would or no, I rather imagined that the Philippines were a sort of Mecca for oldmaids. I find it so very different, that I think it a kind of joke."

"Well, I don't—with two years before

us. I think it a downright miserable prospect," Ethel exclaimed petulantly, almost on the verge of tears. "I'd like to know what we'd do if a band of wild Moros should come down and attack us! I suppose the captain would glory in seeing our vital fluid crimsoning the streets of the place. Why, he might even sic his constabulary on us, if we are too rebellious."

"But there is one month in the year," a masculine voice was saying, close behind them, "when you can get these Venus Baskets. Now, my idea is this—"

Josephine and Ethel both glanced up, to see Captain Cheston and Lieutenant Forest emerge from a bamboo thicket and come towards them down the beach.

Josephine glanced swiftly into Forest's eyes, then regarded the captain curiously, as he tipped his red-trimmed khaki cap, none too graciously. The captain paused and observed them disapprovingly, while Forest made his recognition of them as effusive as possible—behind Cheston's back.

The captain carried a small, Moro reed-basket on one arm, which was carefully covered over with a fragment of fresh banana leaf. Suddenly spying the Venus Basket lying on the sand beside Josephine, he slipped his burden from his arm, placed it on the ground, and sprang eagerly forward, saying:

"Why, there is a *euplectella speciosa*, now! Just what I was telling you about."

His long, lank fingers reached to clutch it in their grasp, but Josephine's protecting hand swiftly covered it and placed it in her lap.

"I beg your pardon," she said, icily, "but this is too fragile a thing to be treated roughly."

"I beg your pardon," the captain returned. "Can I see it for one moment?"

Josephine held it out at arm's length, for his observation, but did not deliver it into his keeping. She was silent, but herself looked the object over with interest.

"I asked if I could see it," repeated the captain, irritably.

"I don't know," she said, aggravatingly. "I can. If you can't, I recommend you to an oculist. It is time you were consulting one; bad sight goes with age, you know."

The captain drew himself up haughtily,

and said: "I asked you a civil question."

"And I am answering it as civilly as I know how; but school-teachers aren't expected to know much, you know, and women school-teachers—! But we are willing to learn 'from the mouths of infants and sucking babes,'" she jeered. "Can you see it or not?"

The captain's brows drew together in a frown, and he almost blushed, as he confessed, sheepishly: "I meant, may I see it?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, as if the real meaning of his remark had not before occurred to her. "Why, certainly." She handed him the object under discussion.

"You see," the captain began, by way of explanation to the lieutenant, as he turned his back upon the girls and proceeded to point out the various beauties of the Venus Basket, "it is a real *euplectella speciosa*, a sponge—"

"Pardon me for interrupting you," Josephine put in, quietly. "I don't like to see the gentleman misinformed. It is not a sponge; it in no way resembles a sponge."

The captain threw his shoulders back aggressively, and his eyes kindled and shot off little sparks of annoyance. He planted a seditious foot forward, as he challenged her with a glance.

"It in no way resembles a sponge," she repeated, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"May I ask what you mean?" he demanded, with battle in his tone. "I am not accustomed to making a statement without knowing whereof I speak. I have the encyclopædia for my authority. This is the typical genus of *euplectellidoe*, a family of siliceous sponges, section *hexactinellidoe*—"

"But it is not a sponge: it is not formed by many minute sea-insects, as sponges are, but is woven—or spun—by one insect, much as a silk-worm encases itself in its cocoon; and after the thing is made, it is sealed, and the insect dies inside. It is a sort of shroud, or sepulcher. Let me show you—There!" she said, shaking the case until the insect rattled out of the small end into the spacious compartment and became plainly visible through the lacy walls.

"And how do you know this?" asked the captain, astonished, thinking of the reputation he would make by being able to furnish a new theory concerning the



DRAWN BY GUSTAVUS C. WIDNEY

"May I ask what you mean?" he demanded.

mysterious thing. "And if this is so, the authority I quote is wrong." He said it in the tone of voice one might use in announcing that the system of the universe is disordered and that the myriad worlds might be expected to clash together at any moment.

"Of course it is wrong," she exclaimed, with iconoclastic irreverence for his pet hobby. "I know, because"—she bit her lips, and flashed a significant and ominous warning towards Ethel—"because, when I was in Cebu, last June, I got one of the

baskets before it was finished, and it had the live insect in it. I put it in a tub of salt water and watched the operation of completing the structure. You see," she said, with another warning glance towards Ethel, "when I was at Wellesley I studied this sort of thing and was at the head of my class; and my father was a naturalist and a professor of conchology, and I have been taught to observe things."

The captain eyed her somewhat dubiously. He remembered the alligator and crocodile incident; but, he reflected, sau-

rians could scarcely be classed with shells and sea-insects.

"Well, well!" he soliloquized, glancing first at the *euplectella speciosa* and then at Josephine, who could hardly keep from laughing aloud as she saw Forest, behind the captain's back, making frantic gestures of encouragement. Ethel observed Forest with a puzzled expression, vaguely wondering if the man had become inoculated with the ever-present *bacillus filipinus*.

The captain went on, sublimely unconscious of the pantomime. "But I can't see how such eminent scientists as those quoted in my encyclopædia can possibly be wrong. Are you sure you know? Yet," he argued aloud with himself, "here is the case, and here is the bug; and the bug could not possibly have entered the case after it was made and sealed; that is as plain as day."

"Yes; your valued dictionary may be wrong sometimes," Josephine could not refrain from remarking. "It is fortunate you happened to come across me before you sent any Venus Baskets away; you will now be able to enlighten some benighted scientists on the subject."

"But I am dubious about accepting such empirical authority," he said, hesitatingly. "I should like to borrow this from you, Miss—Miss—Miss Jefferson, to study for a while."

"It belongs to Miss Page."

"Certainly," Ethel said, generously. "You may have it, if you like. I don't want it."

The captain accepted it without a word. He did not think it necessary to thank her. As commanding officer of the post, of course she could not very well refuse him, he thought; so he took it as a votive offering to his rank. He lifted the portion of banana leaf spread over his reed basket, and was about to put the *euplectella speciosa* in on top of its contents, when Josephine, who was standing near, saw what the basket contained.

"What in the world are you going to do with toad-stools?" she laughed, forgetful of his natural irritable disposition.

"Toad-stools!" he exclaimed, instantly growing mutinous; his eyes glared like those of a basilisk, with evident desire to

strike its tormentor dead. "Toad-stools! What do you think a man of my age would be gathering toad-stools for? I am not an idiot, Miss—Miss—Miss Jefferson. I am not accustomed to going out in the jungle and wasting my valuable time gathering toad-stools! Those are mushrooms—*agaricus campestris*, an edible fungus, which, I hope, will add a flavor to my otherwise frugal meal. Those are mushrooms; and if you knew as much about mushrooms as you pretend to about Venus Baskets, you might get a square meal yourself, if you would take the trouble to hunt it. Look in the dictionary and find out something about them. I commend them to you."

Josephine leaned forward, took one from the collection, and examined it curiously, touching its velvety skin somewhat gingerly. Then, with a sudden impulse she tossed it into the sea, and turned her big mild eyes to regard him pityingly.

The captain stared, resisting a childish inclination to go after the valuable titbit. His glance was too fraught with indignation to be interrogative, but Josephine said, quite seriously: "I think a jury would not blame me for allowing you to go ahead and commit suicide, if you insist. It is nothing to me."

"You have the very common prejudice against them," he sputtered, superciliously, as he rearranged the basket. He felt sorry for people with such plebian tastes that they could not appreciate such delicacies as mushrooms. "Mushrooms are like olives; you have to cultivate a taste for them."

"I don't think so, at all. I am very fond of mushrooms; but toad-stools—!" She turned a pair of innocently compassionate eyes full upon him. "Why! Don't you know the difference between toad-stools and mushrooms? Toad-stools are deadly poison. Look at this," she said, catching the discarded dainty from the water and pointing to the upper surface of the *pileus*. "Since I was a child I have always been warned against touching toad-stools with warts on top of the 'umbrella.' "

"But those are as smooth as can be," he protested, straightening up and looking at her in astonishment.

"Oh, you may think so; but you have

never seen a real one. And look at the ring—Don't you know that the ring on edible toad-stools, or mushrooms, is much nearer the top than that?—It is never so near the bottom of the stem. That is the principal distinction between the esculent and the poisonous fungi. In Rome, once, where I went with my father, we visited a market where nothing is sold but mushrooms, and where a special officer is appointed to see that the poisonous kind is never, by any mistake, sold to patrons. He once told me how to distinguish between the two kinds: the ring—where the veil was broken, you know, before the 'umbrella' was opened out—of the poisonous kind, is at the bottom, instead of the top, of the stem; the 'umbrella' is warty, instead of a soft, satiny texture; and the gills underneath the 'umbrella'—Look at those; they are as white as white can be!" (They were really of the same soft, pinkish yellow as the *pileus*.) "And just smell them! If you had ever smelt a good mushroom, as I have, you would know whether that was one or not."

The captain gasped; his lips were pale. Suppose he had eaten the things!

"But I read them up," he finally vouchsafed. "I heard about the delicious mushrooms in the Philippines, and I went immediately and looked them up. Of course, I know there are two kinds: the edible and the poisonous—the *agaricus campestris* and the *agaricus phalloides*, but I was sure I could remember how to choose the former and guard against the latter. I got some, once before, and they were all right. And I am sure these are the same kind. I got them from the same place."

"My dear man, you might get them always from the very same place, and they might be all right, year after year; and then, some fine day, you might die, and the doctor would say, 'He has been eating poisonous toad-stools and thought they were mushrooms.' My father's hobby was fungi. I have seen him study different specimens, day in and day out; and yet, one day, he brought two kinds to me, for me to tell him which was which. I chose them correctly, immediately. He said it was marvelous, and wanted to know how I did it. Then I told him what the man in the market had said. I once knew a

man—an eminent scientist, too—who died from eating the wrong kind of toad-stools. He died in the most awful agony—"

The captain slowly extracted the hoarded delicacies from the little Moro receptacle and spread them out on the ground around him. He regarded them affectionately, regretfully, almost resentfully. It was such a pity, after he had had such a time to get them, to have to throw them away, after all.

"But may not some of them be good?" he ventured. "I did not get them all in the same place."

Josephine examined them critically and picked out the largest, most luscious of them, laying them aside. Then she eyed the others carefully, reflectively.

"These, I *know*, you can't eat," she said, indicating the selected ones. "It would be positively criminal for me to allow it, when I know so well how to tell the good from the bad ones. Those—there—are ambiguous; some people eat them, but they are of a much inferior grade. They are not positively poisonous, but they might cause—For goodness' sake, what are you going to do? Really, I don't think they would kill you."

The captain had gathered the entire collection into a pile and flung them, with a vicious little exclamation of impatience, into the sea. Then he looked down upon Josephine coldly. Her face was turned away; she was watching the mushrooms as they were being washed out to sea and caught in the coral branches, but she could tell that she was being scrutinized by the captain's little glittering eyes, and she felt that his gaze was not unfriendly.

"I suppose that you expect me to go down on my knees to you and thank you for saving my life," he remarked, with cutting sarcasm. "But I don't want you to think that I am that kind of a fool. I don't feel at all indebted to you for doing your duty—"

"Oh, no," she interrupted, lightly. "There is no reason at all why you should. It was a lucky chance that sent you past here, and that I should happen to know the difference between good and bad mushrooms—that was all." She glanced furtively at the discarded objects, but seeing that they were safely lodged, she deliber-

ately turned her back upon them and spoke to Ethei, who stood a few feet away talking to Forest and following the condemned dainties with a longing eye.

Cheston mumbled something about referring to his encyclopaedia when he reached his quarters, and tramped thoughtfully away to be joined, farther down the beach, by his lieutenant.

At noon, when the two officers sat down to tiffin, a tawny, wide-eyed *muchacha* appeared in the doorway, carrying a pretty, covered dish reposing on a small, lacquered tray, and presented a note to the captain. He took it, with a puzzled expression, and read:

MY DEAR CAPTAIN CHESTON:

The mushrooms were not so bad, after all; as you may see, if you take the trouble to sample them. We enjoyed them immensely. Hope you will not hesitate about eating them, because, I can assure you, I have never been known to make a mistake in selecting the good from the bad ones.

JOSEPHINE JEFFERSON.

"Well, I'll be eternally hanged!" exclaimed the captain, as he set the tray down on the table beside his plate of beans and dived a pewter fork greedily into the contents of Josephine's offering. Suddenly he bethought himself of the lieutenant, and pushed the dish towards him. "Nobody on God's earth but a woman would have done such an underhanded, contemptible, altogether knavish trick as that!" he declared vehemently.

"Oh, I don't know," Forest replied, fishing into the tureen and harpooning a choice morsel. "They would never have been cooked like this if we had let Pedro fix them. I am not so sure but it was an exceeding kindness on her part."

"But it is the impudent nerve of her!" Cheston insisted. "She buncoed me out of the things, by reciting a string of fairy tales which I was idiot enough to believe—counter to my own judgment, too—and then has the audacity to flaunt her victory in my face. I call that note a masterpiece of impertinence."

"I call it a masterpiece of generosity," amended Forest, who was losing no time in proving his appreciation.

Cheston subsided then, and sat, for a long time, staring at the table, which was

guiltless of any cloth, not too free from the pestiferous little red ant that is the most persistent plague of the islands, and certainly not a very inviting article of furniture even when laden with a good dinner, which it had not been for many days.

"Forest," he said, presently, diffidently and with far more manliness than he was accustomed to use when addressing his lieutenant, "what is your opinion of women, anyway?"

There was perplexity in his eyes, and his fingers worked nervously crumbling a fragment ofhardtack into bits which fell like so many leaden shot upon his tin plate.

Forest looked up, surprised, and replied with burlesque ardor: "They are the jewels designed to be set in our crowns of happiness and success. They are delicate, glorious, gorgeous things, frail as butterflies, yet all-enduring. Woman, woman! Thou art the one thing on earth worth living for, the one thing in the Philippines worth fighting for! Woman, thou art a blessing, a fragrance, a thing to be bowed down before and worshiped!" He waved an impaled mushroom in the air, and rolled his eyes rapturously.

Cheston leaned back in his chair and stared. He had never heard Forest express himself thus before. Indeed, now that he thought it over, he reflected that he had never given Forest an opportunity to express himself since he had broached the question of his engagement, to which, the captain believed, he had put a quietus for once and all.

"Do you mean," he asked fiercely—but there was an unaccustomed twinkle in his eyes—do you mean that I have been living with an idiotic cad of an admirer of women, all these days? Have you the presumption to sit there and tell me that you place woman above man, or even on the same plane with him?"

"My dear sir," Forest answered, smiling, as he consumed the last *agaricus campestris* and settled back in his chair, "woman is God's paragon. Why should I not? I am engaged to one of them."

The captain rose, pushed his chair back and kicked at it with a sinister attempt at ferocity, then clasping his hands behind his back, paced the floor. His gaze was bent downward and there was a peculiar

expression lurking about his eyes and lips. Abruptly he turned and came back to where the younger officer was sitting, and said, with a determined jerk of the shoulders:

"Forest, I'll be hanged if I don't, too!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't admire women. I tell you, that girl has got brains. A woman that could deliberately stand up and talk a man out of the only square meal that has graced his table for months, is a wonder. I bow down to her." (He bent with Chesterfieldian grace.) "I actually believe that there are some women who are 'horribly worthy.' A woman that could bunco me —me—!"

He paused, and extracted the little red book from his pocket and threw it spitefully upon the table. Forest watched him with amusement, glimmering in his half-closed, drowsy eyes.

"I want you to come with me," Cheston finally said, energetically and decisively.

"Where to?" Forest inquired, sleepily. "I'm in for a siesta."

"Over to her house, to run up a flag of truce. I'm going to apologize to her, with all due reverence for her sex. Think how I've treated that poor woman! She's got more sense than a dozen men, and I'm going to tell her so."

Forest laughed, and remarked nonchalantly: "I've been telling her so for a year."

Stopping in the act of twirling his mustache, Cheston demanded what Forest meant.

"Why, we've been engaged for a year—"

Fortunately there was a chair conveniently near, and Cheston collapsed upon it. "Great Scott! You don't mean it! And you let me treat her that way?"

"Oh, I knew her; and you too. I was n't afraid you'd get any the better of her; and I was n't in for a court-martial for insubordination, either. Besides, she insisted upon doing things to suit herself; and if you have the fortune ever to have anything to do with women, never oppose them; leave them alone; they know what they are doing."

The captain actually laughed, long and loud and uproariously. One is not much given to joking or to appreciation in the Philippines: life is too strenuous, and the climate is too warm for one to laugh comfortably in.

He mopped the perspiration from his brow and laughed again. Then he went over to the small, flag-draped mirror hanging on the *salangi* wall, and contemplated his likeness studiously, meditatively, and approvingly.

"Cheston," he declared presently, addressing his reflection in the glass, "you can't have her, so you might as well make up your mind to that.

But there's another one—" He turned impulsively to Forest. "What do you say to our taking some rifles and a small detachment, and 'buscaring' some wild pig or venison? Those girls must be nearly starved! Say, Forest," he added, with a dolefully mirthful grin, "there are just two of them—one apiece for us. Let's have a *fiesta*. We have n't had any fun since we came to this beastly hole!"



DRAWN BY GUSTAVUS C. WIDNEY

"What is your opinion of women, anyway?"

## Taking Care of Caroline

BY REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

I had been at it for a month now and as, that afternoon, I stood before my mirror taking more than common pains with my fine raiment, I was forced to own, in strict secrecy, that my task had not proved nearly so arduous as it had, at first, appeared. With trusts, sentimental and business, as truly as with persons, does familiarity breed contempt, and yet, even at that late date, I felt as near an approach to conscientious scruples as, in such affairs, I ever come to feel.

I recalled, with some pangs of contrition, how devoutly I had cursed my star when I received Witter's note. Bob and I had been good friends—there was no denying that; he had done much for me, and I would have done all that lay in my power to requite the debt. I even went so far as to assure myself that I would have laid down my life for him, had there been any danger—which, fortunately, there never was—that such a course would be required of me. But it is one thing for a friend to ask merely one's life, and quite another for him to demand that you look after his primary love-affair while he grubs away on a business commission with the whole broad Atlantic between you. If the lady is plain, the task is a bore; if she is pretty, if she prove to have large and innocent eyes, the blue sort that are always steadily regarding your own, if she—Well, hang it, a man's life is, after all, a thing that he can give, whereas his heart is apt to prove to be something that he can't withhold.

Besides, I have always been particularly susceptible to blondes.

Witter should have known all this; he was certainly aware of my predilections, and he should have acted accordingly. But no, he must trot away to Europe to add another twenty thousand to his already disgustingly large pile, and write me from Liverpool, what he had never had the courage to confess to my face, that he was head over heels in love with a girl of whom I had never before seen or heard.

There was, at the outset, only one prom-

ise of real sport in the whole love-sick epistle. It ran:

There's a fellow named Harper—John Stokes Harper—who's been butting in a good deal lately, and I want you to keep him out of the way, as you so well know how to do. He's one of the gilded galaxy and the only formidable bid against me. However, I don't think he's as yet come any nearer a declaration than I have, and your job is to see that he does n't get within shouting-distance until I return with the few more pennies that are required to put me into the millionaire-class and give me a fair chance at Caroline and her papa's roll. Of course, I'm sorry to drop Jean, but C. is a nice girl, and the old gentleman's got a hard corner on the double-eagle market. That's why he's for J. Stokes Harper and disapproves of me.

It is true that Jean Burnham always cared a good deal more for me than she did for Witter, even after my last re-engagement to Marjorie had been announced; but Witter did n't know that, and so I began to see how despicable it was for him to drop her for the richer girl, or, at any rate, think he dropped her. No wonder the new sweetheart's family objected to him; I did myself; and the more I saw of Caroline, the stronger my objections became.

However, I am not a man to shirk my duty when its performance involves the pleasure of a lady, and so I looked in upon Miss Caroline.

To my surprise, for Witter usually has vile taste, I found her well worth looking in upon. She was petite, and pink and blue, and naïve, and I don't know a combination to beat that. She dressed stunningly and with a mature taste that gave an old piquancy to a figure which, had she been in her proper set, would have been that of a girl whose coming-out was still a vision of distant delight. Moreover, her father, as I took pains to discover, had made a pile of money in Chicago hams, or Oregon public lands, or something of that sort, and as he and the hams, or whatever they were, rejoiced in the patronymic of Boggs, it was only natural that the girl

should wish to change it, even at the risk of such homely bargains—they seem more homely every time I think of them—as Witter and Harper.

I ran into Harper on my first visit. He was one of these athletic people, and muscle and money stuck out all over him. His face was red, his eyes like a doll-baby's, his hair tow-colored and curly. You were always afraid that the next time he threw back his shoulders—he was perpetually at the trick—he'd fall over backwards, and whenever he took one of his customary gigantic breaths you began to dodge from a prospective fusillade of flying shirt-studs.

When I came in, he did succeed in conveying the impression that I had interrupted a proposal, but he could n't talk and, I write it in all modesty, I can. Also, I was quicker than he at the games of opera, matinée, and take-a-drive-with-me, and in about five minutes I had engaged for the next fortnight all of Caroline's waking time.

Of course, the first day out of sight of land, so, to speak, I called her that. She could n't expect me to put up with the last part of her name, and so, as she was the friend of my best friend, we compromised on the first part: I proposed calling her Caroline; she stood out for "Miss Boggs," and we compromised on Caroline.

Then I arose to the heights of heroism and, right at the start—we were driving to the play—struck one blow for conscience's sake. I said:

"What a charming fellow Witter is—most of the time."

She admitted that he seemed a pleasant fellow.

"Of course," truth compelled me to admit, "you see only the best of him."

"Why so?" she asked.

I hate point-blank questions, but I was resolved to be a martyr for once in my life, if only to see how it felt.

"Ah, Caroline," I murmured. (Outside of novels, I'm the only man I know who can murmur and not talk like an ass.) "Ah, Caroline, you 're a woman—"

"I have always been told so."

"And, therefore," I paused over her levity, "you must know that he wants always to put his best patent leather No. 9 forward in your presence. I must tell

you something; I must betray a secret—"

"Please don't; I thought I was the woman."

"But I must, because—because I am to see so much of you, and I am afraid—"

"Am I so awful?"

"You are so awfully adorable—" (I had to let out that much in simple justice to myself.) "You are so like someone," I continued, "who was everything—pardon me, but you'll understand in a moment why I say this—everything in the world to me."

I paused and looked out of my window of the cab. "Her name, too," I added, "was Caroline."

And it was—it's Marjorie's middle name.

The present Caroline was tugging with suspicious violence, at a glove which needed no tugging whatever. I saw that much, even though I appeared to be engaged with my window.

"And she is now not everything in the world to you?" asked my companion.

I wanted to say that the supposition was correct, and that the immediate situation was responsible for its correctness. But women love nothing as much as a sweet, sad romance, so I again immolated my desires—I do nothing by halves, and I was going to be a martyr if it killed me—and responded:

"I shall never see her again." For which I had the best of authority: Marjorie's own. She had broken with me only that morning. She usually breaks with me on Tuesdays, but this week she had been a day late.

Caroline looked out of her window. There was another pause. Presently, and in the tenderest tone, she whispered:

"Is she—is she dead?"

I coughed. I did n't quite like to bury Marjorie without the proper rites, and yet it was my duty to Witter to obey Caroline's lightest wish. So I dodged the issue by blowing my nose.

But, would you believe it, my companion took this as an assent? She laid her gloved hand on my arm. In the changing lights of the passing street-lamps I could see that her eyes were full of unshed tears.

"Forgive me," she said, and, by Jove, there was that in her voice which made me believe the whole thing was true!

"We will say no more about it," I mag-

nanimously continued, again practising self-sacrifice. "I merely mentioned it because, as I said, you are so like her, Caroline, and I am to see so much of you—and you are the woman whom my best friend wants, above all others, to marry."

She gave a little startled "Oh!" I reached for the hand which had so lately been upon my arm.

I got it, but there was instantly a louder "Oh!" followed by a very severe "Mr. Randolph!" and the instant withdrawal of the gloved hand.

"I beg your pardon," I said in the sad, lost-love tone of my latest words, "but you are so like her, and I loved her so—Caroline! Help me, I pray you to be true to her and to my friend: never henceforth let me forget that I have the happiness of being by your side only that I may have the labor of pleading Witter's cause."

The result of that nearly bowled me over. It brought the little hand back to mine and a steady pressure with it.

"For your own sake," she said, "and for the lost girl's sake, I shall forget what you have done. And if my presence is any comfort to you—"

"You do not know how much!"

"Then you may see me as often as you choose, until—"

"Until Witter returns?" I took her up. After all, if it had to be said, I would rather hear it from my own lips than from hers. "And," I continued, "you—you will not let me forget why I am here?"

"I will not," she answered.

And there was where I made my first wrong move.

Thereafter, through all the very many pleasant days and nights that followed, whenever things got a bit interesting, I'd have to sit back and listen to a lot of praise of Witter, playing chorus to the soliloquies. I had known Witter ever since he was a youngster, and she had known him scarcely a year, and yet I had never guessed at the perfect mine of virtues that lay hidden beneath his rough exterior. As time went on, I was lost in wonder that, first, so pretty a girl could be so stupid as to see a lot in him, and, second, that so wise a man as I could be ass enough to agree with her.

The complete extinction of Harper

seemed to be my only solace. Him we never mentioned at all, and now I made up my mind that Witter also needed a little rest. Therefore, the night before, the point at which I began this veracious narrative, I had, after a particularly long scene of this sort, definitely made up my mind that, after years of believing otherwise, I was really only human and that there were limits to all patience, even the patience of an ass.

That is why I took, this afternoon, particular pains with my appearance, and why, having manfully succeeded in banishing the scruples aforementioned, I sallied forth with splendid resolution, to meet Caroline.

"Hello!" she said. She was looking charming in a suit of blue. "You're early."

I bowed.

"It is never too early," I gallantly replied, "to see the sunshine."

She looked at me with those wonderful baby eyes that never seemed to take in the slightest subtlety.

"You know," she cried, "that you never get up before eleven!"

"I know it," I submitted, "but you have only my word for it, and I am beginning to fear that this is the shakiest possible sort of evidence. However, I had come to propose that you put the park to shame by your presence there."

And so we set out. It is only a short drive; indeed, I have frequently walked the distance, from the other direction, of course, and have always passed the time easily enough. But upon this occasion the way had certainly lengthened, and every time I tried to make the talk personal and intimate and comfortable, I had to hear more praise of Witter. Until the end there was only one word in the whole encomium that at all interested me: it seemed that the ground for father Bogg's objection to my friend was, indeed, as he had guessed, the younger man's apparent inability to earn a livelihood.

"But, great Heavens!" I cried, "what use has a man worth nearly a million with an ability to earn a livelihood? I could n't earn a dollar to save my neck, and I have n't half a million, yet I don't worry at all."

Caroline regarded me pityingly.

"Ah," she said, "but you're different from—the others."

I had forgotten that, but I persisted in my objection just the same.

"Well, you see," she explained, "it is n't that father wants Mr. Witter—or any other young man of—er—my acquaintance—to work; it's only that he has always said that a man who could n't work when he does n't have to is sure to have to when he can't."

I did not attempt again to instance the terrible example to the contrary then seated at her side. Instead:

"So that," I dryly remarked, "explains the business fever that has seized Bob so recently." Her delicate eyebrows rose perceptibly, and: "Ah, Caroline," I continued, "I wonder—I wonder that, if by any chance, I should ever again have such an inducement as Witter—"

The doubting eyebrows retreated before an expression of delight which quite disregarded my abortive speculation.

"Is n't it splendid," she delightedly nodded, "that he should do it all for me."

I looked at her quickly. Yes; I could almost—almost—truthfully have said that I would have done the same. But I did n't say that. What I said was truth absolute:

"And I thought it was only insanity!"

"Insanity?" she shuddered.

"Yes," I said. "They get that way sometimes, these fellows that are born to wealth. They are attacked by a mania for throwing away their money. Some of them go into politics, but most of them don't get any further than the wheat-pit."

At that she laughed—straight at me. (She has excellent teeth.)

"Oh," she cried, "you don't know Bob!"

She took that, I thought, rather sharply.

"What do you know?" she asked.

I did not want to make trouble for Bob; besides, making trouble for Bob meant, in the present circumstances, making trouble for myself; so I had to get out of it the best way I could by saying that I only meant I knew Bob and knew that, with me as with her, to know him was to love him and to name him was to blaze.

But even then she was not altogether satisfied.

"I shall ask him," she averred, "next week."

I did not delve into the nature of the inquiry which she intended to put. I only intimated that, as it would be seven days

before he would get the letter, and another seven before she got his reply, there would be plenty of time for her to possess her soul in patience.

"No there won't," she smiled. "I have a surprise—one that Mr. Witter's just had for me. He's coming home next week!"

Was he indeed? That was just like Bob! I might have expected it of him. And here was I having to look pleased. Naturally, I thanked my stars that we were in the park at last and that I could have a chance, in "dismounting, to hide my feelings.

We sat on a bench. It was a shady bench in a secluded spot. I have used it upon several occasions and I would advise you to look it up.

"Did you ever notice," I asked, "the peculiar sadness in the few remaining leaves that cling to the boughs at this late season of the year and seem to take fresh heart at the false promise of such a day as this?"

Again she eyed me hard.

"Yes," she answered, smiling quizzically, "Bob says—"

But I laid a restraining hand upon hers—and kept it there.

"Look here," I gently remonstrated, "Bob's coming home next week, and he's perfectly well able to speak for himself. If you wish, I'll make it a point to ask him the first thing, as soon as he deigns to drop in on me, just what sentiment is aroused in his breast by the sight of 'the last leaf on the bough.' But I submit that we'd better leave Bob out of the conversation for this one afternoon."

The very mention of such a thing seemed to shock her little unsophisticated soul.

"Leave Bob out?" she echoed in dismay.

"Yes," I stubbornly responded. "I think that, for the past ten days, we've had about enough of Bob."

I looked at her, but her big eyes seemed to be crying horror, so I dropped my stubborness and spoke with a softer note.

"It is," I added, "our last afternoon."

Like all innocence, she was fearfully literal: "There's a whole week of them!"

"Ah yes," I said, "a week: but there are some weeks, at least one in every life, that go as swiftly as an afternoon."

"But," she objected, "you'll still be in

town when Bob gets back. And after—”

“No,” I said gravely, “for me there will be no afterward.”

Again her gaze grew serious. “You know that you told me always to remind you—”

“Oh, well,” I said, “we’ll put it this way: Let’s drop Bob for this one afternoon, because the woman who marries him is bound to get a plenty of him hereafter.”

Her innocent laugh encouraged me. “Then you think I could possibly tire of him?” she questioned.

But I, as I had so broadly intimated, had tired of him already, so I let it go at that.

“At any rate,” I said, “he’ll be a strange beast if he ever tires of you.”

She smiled prettily. Evidently she could follow, if one laid it on heavily enough.

“Now that,” she averred, “is rather nice of you to say.”

“Well,” I concurred, “we’ve had a pretty jolly time of it while it lasted, have n’t we?”

She nodded her golden head.

“Together?” I persisted.

She turned her head a bit from me.

“I think,” I kept it up, “that I have never had a happier one.”

She turned away altogether.

“Tell me,” I persisted; “has it been so very unpleasant to you?”

“No--o.” I could just catch the whisper.

“Life,” I commented, “is a rather complex thing, is n’t it?”

The golden head, still turned away, bowed assent.

“And these few glad afternoons it gives us are only enough to give one the desire that there might be more of them.”

This time she was utterly silent, and I ventured.

“For my part, I—hang it; I can’t help it!—I wish they might go on forever.”

And I did—forever, until Marjorie perceived that I was no longer a laughing

matter. “Listen,” I pursued: “We made a compact, you and I, on that first drive to the play. Until now we have kept it. But this—is about my last chance, Caroline.”

Her face was still turned, but she interrupted me firmly enough:

“Have you forgotten the—the other one?”

“No,” I said; it was an ugly corner, but I saw the straight way out. “No, I remember her, and it is precisely because I remember her that I say what I have said.”

That, on the face of it was a pleasant compliment, and, beneath the surface, it was a plain truth, for I have always thought it a good plan to show Marjorie that there are some women who really appreciate me.

“And have you forgotten Mr. Witter?”

She had turned at last, and I somehow did not like the look in her face. But I brazened it out.

“Witter,” I said, “will have, henceforth, to look out for himself.”

“You will guard his cause against no one.”

“Against no one,” I repeated.

“Not even against Jack?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I beg yours. I mean Mr. Harper.”

She was smiling—smiling that divine, childish, guileless smile that had so deceived, and so tempted, me from the first. I began to comprehend.

“Why Jack?” I asked.

“Because,” she explained, “I really belong to him.”

I got to my feet. I confess to a certain amazement. But even at that crisis my first thought was of my friend.

“My trust!” I cried. “Remember my commission from Bob! Don’t tell me that this happened while I slept at my post!”

“On the contrary,” she reassured me, “it had just been decided the moment before you entered our house.”

The drive back from the park was one of the longest I have ever taken.

# A Deal In Diamonds

BY CAMPBELL MAC CULLOCH

"This time, Larry," remarked Mr. Simpson, "we're going out for a big collection of sparklers, and we're going to land them so easy that it'll be like taking candy from a baby. It's going to be a costume piece, too, and you'll be a part of th' play, my lad."

"I'll take off my hat to you, Simpson," observed young Mr. James Forsyth Kingsley, familiarly known to his acquaintances as Larry; "you've got more unadulterated nerve than all the 'queer' men I ever stacked up against. You've just pulled off one of the neatest bond deals that ever worried the public, and you've squared an old grudge at the same time. Now you're out to gather in some diamonds, just because you think you need a few waistcoat buttons. You're the positive limit. What is this latest rave of yours, and when and where is it going to come off?"

And young Mr. Kingsley sighed easily and lighted one of his own special brand of cigarettes. Then he glanced at the heavy curtains that shaded the windows of the apartment, and sighed again, while Mr. Simpson watched him with a benevolence of manner that bespoke some dark attempt on other people's wealth. Mr. Kingsley had observed, during his acquaintance with the astute Simpson, that an extremely bland manner had invariably to do with some particularly bold attempt on property other than their own, and that the degree of hazard to be employed was exactly proportionate to the extent of the smile that wreathed itself about the luxurious double chin of his companion. In this instance, the smile was so all-pervading that even the household cat responded with an arched back and other feline expressions of pleased sympathy. On the table beside him, Mr. Simpson had laid a folded newspaper, and this he picked up again without relaxing his features. He handed it to Mr. Kingsley and observed:

"If you will read that, Larry, you will get next to what started me mappin' out a diamond deal," and his finger indicated

a paragraph that he had ringed with a lead pencil. Mr. Kingsley took the paper and bent his eye on the spot indicated. The stick or so of type read:

The failure of Doubleday, Decker, & Company, the bond and brokerage firm of Wall street, which was announced yesterday, has placed on the market twelve of the most perfectly matched diamonds that have been seen in this country. The stones had been imported for Mrs. Doubleday by Giffney & Company, but the financial crash has thrown them back on the hands of the jewelry firm.

Each stone is a three and a half pure blue-white jewel, and the twelve are held at a price that runs close to \$50,000. Mrs. Doubleday ordered them to adorn a gown she was to wear at the Martin reception. The stones are said to be similar to the famous Marlborough brilliants.

Young Mr. Kingsley laid down the paper again, and met the enigmatic smile of Mr. Simpson with a frank stare of admiration that challenged that gentleman to further explanation.

"Do you mean to say, Sim," said he, "that you're going to try to win those diamonds out of the store?"

"That's the way it looks to me, son," replied Mr. Simpson, "and that's just what's goin' to come off, if I'm any expert on jewelry dope. How d' you like th' idee?"

"You're a wonder, and that's all there is to it. I'll bet there's not another grafter in New York today that would take a chance on a daylight job with that money back of it, and I'll say now, that I honestly believe you'll pull it off," said young Mr. Kingsley softly. "I don't know how you're going to do it, nor anything about it, but for gall, you have the canal horse beat to a whisper."

"Don't flatter me, Larry," said Mr. Simpson, with a deprecating wave of his chubby hand. "I'm too old for it. We need them diamonds worse than any one you know, and we're a-goin' to get them. I've been sittin' here all evenin' figurin' out th' way to get them, an' it's come to me a runnin'. I've picked it up and turned it around, and felt it for rough corners

and saw edges and leaks and flaws, and it holds water all th' way and every way. It's up to me and you to get them stones, and we'll get 'em, and that inside five days—may be inside three. Th' only thing I want to say is that you've got to do just what I say, no more and no less, and keep your head about you. I'll attend to th' rest with some help."

Mr. Kingsley helped himself to the sherry with a look on his face that would have done credit to a cherub, and then he leaned back and contemplated the benevolent old person opposite him with undisguised admiration.

"Lord, what a foxy old bird it is," he said, as if to himself. "Is there a turn in the box of graft that he does n't know and can improve on? I don't believe it. Some of the lads who play this game would walk into that store, dynamite the safe, jimmy the showcases, and sandbag the clerks; but that's too raw for our good old Sim. He's got some idea back there, that will smooth out all the wrinkles and make this a pretty little business proposition that 'll run along just as easy as can be. I can see those diamonds glittering there on the table, all set out on a piece of enameled paper. Raffles was a joke to him, and Professor Moriarity was a clumsy old bludgeon worker. He's a regular old criminal wizard, that's what he is."

And Mr. Kingsley stared knowingly at the ceiling and winked expressively. Then he turned to Mr. Simpson and remarked:

"And how's it going to happen, old man?"

"Simplest thing in th' world, Larry," responded Mr. Simpson. "It's just an improvement on an old scheme, you know. Every big thing I've ever hooked up has been just a bit better than th' regulation stunts. You know th' way one guy takes a machine that's bin turnin' out good goods, and adds a spring or somethin' to it, and makes it do three times as much? Well, that's th' way with me. Now, I've got this diamond dicker fixed up that way. I've took an old gag an' improved it. That's all."

"But what's the old 'gag?'" demanded Mr. Kingsley.

"You know th' phoney check flim-flam?" inquired Mr. Simpson. "Well,

that's th' first bit of it. Th' idea was to go into a guy's place and buy somethin' and hand him a bum check with a good line of talk, and make a get-away with th' goods before he woke up. That's the main part of my new scheme, but it works different. Then there was variations on that, but it never went much further."

"But you can't work anything like that on Giffney's, you know," objected Mr. Kingsley, a little dubiously.

"Nobody's a-goin' to," replied Mr. Simpson. "We're goin', a little bit deeper. You know, that firm's wise to most every stunt that's bin put up, an' it's worth a man's life to even peek into th' store."

"Is it sending for a clerk to call on a gentleman in his apartment with the diamonds?" asked Mr. Kingsley, suspiciously. "Because, if it is, you can surely count me out."

"I'm ashamed at you, Larry," said Mr. Simpson. "And you, after handin' me that beautiful bouquet awhile back. Why, Giffney's folks would holler with laughter cramps if such an idee was suggested to 'em. No, no, my boy. It's a lot better than that."

"Then what is it?" demanded Mr. Kingsley.

"This takes a swell female," replied Mr. Simpson. "A gal that can look th' real cheese, and what's more, make other folks believe it, too."

"Now look here, Sim," remonstrated young Mr. Kingsley, rising with an emphatic gesture. "I want you to know that you don't rig me up in any female clothes. I've been a whole lot of things, but these trousers are good enough for me. I won't stand for skirts."

"Nobody's asked you, and besides, you could n't look like a lady if you was to be shot for it," said Mr. Simpson. "I said a female that could look th' part."

At this point there was a gentle tintinnabulation of the bell, and Mr. Simpson cocked an eye at Mr. Forsyth.

"If I'm not a bum guesser, this here's th' party now," he remarked.

"Who is it?" demanded Mr. Kingsley.

"Little Ella Montgomery," replied Mr. Simpson. "You remember her? She used to be Jim Craven's wife. Got a Vassar



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"If you will read that, Larry, you will get next."

education, and is all th' goods. Wait, I'm goin' to let her in."

Within two minutes he returned with Miss Montgomery, and she did not belie his description. She was tall, dark, handsome, and wore a languid air of well-bred insolence that carried conviction with it. She nodded briefly to Mr. Kingsley, who greeted her with his best manner, sat down in Mr. Simpson's chair and looked about her.

"Pretty cheerful place you have here, Sim," she observed. "Now, I've got a date with myself. What's your trouble, and where do I come in?"

Mr. Simpson seated himself on the sofa and gazed at her with some admiration, mixed with a little pride. He had a part in her bringing up, and she was a credit to him, he fondly believed.

"I want you to work with me and Larry, here," he said. "I've got an idea that ought to put us about forty-five thousand to the good, and you're declared in. How are you fixed for swell clothes?"

"Do you mean the real goods?" inquired Miss Montgomery.

"I mean th' very best. The society thing with all th' trimmin's and what goes with it. Good enough for th' Astoria."

"Nothin' doin' in that line," said Miss Montgomery. "What are you aiming to pull off? A reception to Mrs. Astor?"

"It's a little deal in diamonds," said Mr. Simpson. "I want you to do th' heavy society swell from out o' town, an' you've got to be dressed for th' part. What'll it cost to outfit you with about six trunks o' good stuff?"

"I can do it on eleven hundred, I suppose," said Miss Montgomery, modestly. "Some of th' trunks will be faked with junk below and the real thing in the top trays, but they'll answer the purpose."

"I'll give you fifteen hundred tonight before you go," said Mr. Simpson, "and you start out tomorrow for Chicago and buy what you want out there. Now, listen, this is what we're after, me and Larry." And he proceeded to give her an outline of what was required, which took an hour to detail. When he had finished, Mr. Simpson took from his wallet the money mentioned and handed it over to the girl. Then he said:

"Now, you're sure you've got it right? You're to come on here from Chicago on the Limited. Telegraph ahead for rooms, drive to the hotel, and make a splurge. You'll register as Mrs. James Honore, an' you'll get th' manager of th' hotel to get for you a nice carriage with guys on the box, all proper an' right. You're to pull th' heavy society from th' start. You go to Giffney's an' buy some little junk, so they'll get used to seein' you around for a day or two. I'll have it fixed so you can make a deposit of about \$55,000 in th' Vanderhof Trust Company, an' you'll use a check book. I'll get a letter to you about three days after you get located an' that'll put you next to what's goin' on. It'll tell you every move that you're a-goin' to make, an' what we're framin' up for a get-away."

"If that's all, I might as well be going," said Ella, rising from her chair. "What's Larry going to do in this little costume piece?"

"He'll have a costume, too, an' you don't need to worry none," said Mr. Simpson. "You an' him don't meet in this here play till it's all over. Now, skiddoo, Ella."

The girl wished them several different kinds of good fortune in her own way and went forth, to see them no more for several days at least. When she had gone, and Simpson had locked the door after her, and had returned to his chair, young Mr. Kingsley opened his heart and poured forth another floral tribute that brought the blush of conscious pride to Mr. Simpson's mellow features.

"That'll be about all o' that," protested Mr. Simpson. "Now, to get down to cases. You'll be hangin' round th' house here with me till th' blow-off. I'll fix it so you get th' proper uniform, an' then it'll be up to you, my boy. Now, th' lay is this. Ella blows in here from Chi. with her glad rags. She puts up at the Astoria an' makes her grand-stand play. When she gets around to it, she asks about diamonds an' works it so the main squeezes show her th' stones we're after. That's where you'll be waitin' on th' outside ready for business. When you get what's comin' to us, you hike back here to th' flat, and strip that uniform and burn it up. Then



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"What's your trouble and where do I come in?"

we wait for her nobs to trip in here with th' diamonds and we'll all stay here nice and comfortable till th' row blows over. I've got th' flat stocked up pretty well, anyway."

When some of the finer points of the drama had been gone over so there was no misunderstanding, young Mr. Kingsley took his leave and set forth for his own lodgings in a modest part of the East Side.

Four days later the society editors mentioned that Mrs. James Honore, from Chicago, was domiciled at the Astoria, and that she was here on a shopping expedition, and very quietly. That night Mrs. Honore received a letter from her good friend Mr. Simpson which detailed her instructions. At the hotel every effort was made to please her. She had obtained a landau lined with pearl gray and an irreproachable outfit as far as horses and men were concerned. Numerous parcels were delivered at the hotel, and turned over to the maid the management furnished, when it was understood that her own Abigail had been taken ill on the train and had to be sent back to Chicago.

The details of the rest are almost cruel in their simplicity. Mrs. Honore was known to have an account at the Vanderhof Trust Company, and checks drawn on that institution were readily honored. At Giffney's they came to know her, too, for she made small purchases of jewelry, such as lockets, rings, chains, and the like, and went to the length of having a few rings re-set. For this work she paid by check on the institution above named. So far things moved with an ease and precision that spoke highly of the executive ability of the excellent Simpson.

It was on a Tuesday that the sad blow fell upon the firm of Giffney. Mrs. Honore, a radiant vision in virgin white, drove up in her carriage and languidly entered the place on Fifth avenue. Several clerks made to rush for her, but the manager waved them aside in lordly manner. He, and he alone, should await her pleasure.

"I'm looking for a few unset stones," volunteered Mrs. Honore. "I'm having a gown made that is to be something rather out of the ordinary, and I require from ten to fourteen unset diamonds to carry out the design."

"About what price or size?" asked the obsequious manager.

"I'm sure it makes not the slightest difference," said Mrs. Honore, with a lift of her aristocratic eyebrows. "The stones are the chief difficulty. I really have no expectation of finding them here. I suppose I'll have to get them in London or Paris."

This was putting the firm of Giffney on its metal with a vengeance, and the manager took occasion to remark:

"I think, madam, that we shall be able to do quite as well for you as any one abroad. Our collection is said to be unsurpassed. In fact, we have twelve of the most beautifully matched stones that have ever been brought to this country. I should like to show them to you."

"I don't mind looking at them," said Mrs. Honore, with a bored expression, "but I have n't the remotest idea that they will answer the purpose."

However, she followed the manager to the wire cage, and after the door had been locked, purely as a matter of form, she permitted herself to be shown the stones. They were marvels of fire and cutting indeed, and she had hard work to keep her face calm. She did nobly, however, and after looking them over and learning their history, said:

"I think they will answer the purpose. How much are they?"

"Forty-eight thousand dollars, madam," replied the manager, with bated breath. If he succeeded in making the sale, he was a made man.

"Forty-eight thousand, eh? Have you a pen and ink?" asked Mrs. Honore, with an air that would be hard to describe, as she drew out her check book.

It would be difficult to describe the manager's feelings, or the expression of his face, as he called softly for a clerk to bring the ink and a pen. His thoughts flew everywhere, and he came down to earth with the severest effort, just as Mrs. Honore tossed over the check, and remarked:

"I will take them with me. You may make them into a neat package, if you will."

"But my—I mean—it is hardly—you will pardon me, madam, but I will have to consult one of the firm," stammered

the manager. "You see, it is a little irregular to permit customers to take such large amounts—"

"Do you imagine the check will not be honored?" asked Mrs. Honore, with the utmost disdain.

"Not at all—not at all, I assure you, but

I will—er—you will understand I must obtain the consent of the firm before such a transaction can be completed," and the manager broke out into a cold perspiration while he talked.

"I am rather pressed for time," said Mrs. Honore, looking at her watch brace-



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

"I am looking for a few unset stones."

let. "If you will hurry, I shall be obliged," and she lay back in her chair with an air of well-bred boredom that was simply indescribable. The manager hurried to the private offices and returned almost instantly with the elder Mr. Giffney. He bowed to Mrs. Honore, and in his turn attempted to explain. With such large amounts the firm must, in self-protection, be doubly careful. He had not the remotest idea but that the check would be honored, but if madam would but wait a few moments while he telephoned to the bank—and then the storm broke. For well handled invective delivered in a masterly manner; for neatly turned scornful phrases that shrivelled like white-hot brands; for deliberate and effective sar-

casm, nothing like Mrs. Honore's tirade of indignation had been heard in the premises of Giffney & Company in a generation. When she had exhausted her tirade, Mrs. Honore remarked:

"I will wait while you telephone, but I beg to remind you that my time is limited. Kindly make haste." And once more she lay back and tapped impatiently with her toe upon the floor. It was a splendid bit of nerve, for she winked not an eyelash, and she carried out the part to perfection. Five—ten minutes passed, and Mrs. Honore became impatient. She rose with glowering brows and bent on the manager a look of scorn that would have shrivelled him still further, had that been possible. Then she said icily:

"I think this farce has gone far enough. I will look elsewhere for what I require in future. Kindly return me my check, and after you have made quite certain your diamonds are intact, I will be pleased if you will let me out."

There was nothing to be done but obey. When her check had been returned to her by the elder Mr. Giffney, who hastened up to assure her that everything was most satisfactory; that the bank had informed them that Mrs. Honore's check was good for the amount named; that he regretted, etc., Mrs. Honore swept with regal grace to her carriage and departed.

The firm of Giffney went into executive session. They blamed the manager; they blamed each other; they scowled upon the clerks and they muttered imprecations upon the whims of woman until half an hour had passed. The episode very nearly caused a split in the firm of Giffney, and just when it was at its height, the door opened, and Mrs. Honore, brilliant, scintillating, ingratiating and covered with a pretty confusion, made her way to the manager and spoke gently to him:

"You must think terribly of me," she began, with a pretty but dignified tremor of her mouth, "but my nerves are frightfully upset. I've been one or two places, but I find such stones as you showed me cannot be duplicated here. I've set my heart on them. Do you think you could forgive me and let me have them, after all?"

To say that the manager was paralyzed

would be but to describe his condition faintly. To say that the elder Mr. Giffney's jaw dropped down until his chin rubbed the top button on his waistcoat would be nothing; to describe the genial, overpowering haste with which the junior partner rushed into the breech and took the matter on his own hands, would be almost superfluous, but it is necessary.

It required but ten minutes to arrange the details, and there was no hesitation this time. Had the bank not affirmed that Mrs. Honore's check for forty-eight thousand dollars was as good as gold and would be honored? Assuredly. Did they not know her here at Giffney's? Of a surety. Then why the necessity for delay? Obviously, none at all. Any reason why the lady should not receive her property? How ridiculous! It took but a few moments for the precious gems to be packed securely in a metal casket, wrapped, sealed, and delivered to their new owner. The check again fluttered across the glass counter, Mrs. Honore smiled sweetly—an all-embracing smile—every one in sight bowed low; the senior partner grunted heavily, recovered the poise of his lower jaw, and dived into his office, and Mrs. Honore of Chicago made a graceful exit with her diamonds held tightly in her hands. The manager opened the door of her carriage, and at her request gave the coachman orders to drive to Hirschfield & Cooper's, and—that was all.

As Mrs. Honore drove away, young Mr. Kingsley, neatly and effectively attired in a close-fitting uniform of blue and gold, with the name of the firm of Giffney on his cap, presented at the paying teller's window of the Vanderhof Trust Company a check that was precisely similar in every respect to that given by Mrs. Honore to the junior partner of Giffney & Company. The amount was large, but the glittering golden name of the firm on the cap worn by Mr. Kingsley reassured the paying teller and he passed over bundles of notes with the gruff remark:

"They're in a mighty rush for the cash. Why did n't they send it through the clearing house?"

"Customs duties has got to be paid in cash," curtly responded young Mr. Kings-



DRAWN BY HOWARD V. BROWN

Customs duties has got to be paid in cash."

ley, packing the bundles in a black leather satchel of the approved type.

Arrived at Hirschfield & Cooper's establishment on Twenty-third street, Mrs. Honore got out of her carriage and entered the store. She failed to pause before any of the attractively burdened counters, however, but made her way unobtrusively to the Twenty-second street entrance, entered a cab that was waiting there, and disappeared.

The scene that transpired at Giffney & Company's when the real messenger came back and reported that there were no funds in the Vanderhof Trust Company

to meet the check, barring one hundred and fifty-three dollars, may better be imagined than described. The shrieks for the police may still be heard reverberating through Fifth avenue, but up in a cosy flat in the uptown district on the East Side, three individuals peered for many days at twelve beautiful diamonds reposing on some white glazed paper which had been removed from a little metal box, and the manager of the Astoria wonders to this day what ever became of Mrs. James Honore of Chicago, who left costly garments far in excess of her hotel bill.

## Old Force-o'-Habit's Way

BY VINCENT HARPER

The first time, I thought nothing about it. By the time that it happened again—just an hour later—things had become so deadly dull that almost any sign of life would have been diverting, so I peered out into the foggy night and watched the moving light for a moment, and then went back and poked the fire. The old clock on the tavern mantel struck nine. I guess that I must have dozed off then, for presently, as it seemed to me, the clock struck ten. I rose, stretched myself, yawned, and walked over to the window.

There it was again! The blinking point of light showed once more at the turn in the road, and came bobbing and swinging toward me through the fog. This time my curiosity was aroused—the endless hours of vacuous waiting had left me rather empty minded—and I determined to find out what the man with the lantern was doing at that hour of the night. Drawing the heavy curtains behind me to shut out the glow of the fire, I pressed my face against the cold damp pane, and watched.

The night was so thick that I could not make out the figure of the man, but as the light barely moved along, I judged that he must be very old—a safe enough inference, too, in Squalkum Cove, where every man that I had met was at least 70 and a retired captain. He wore a long rubber sea coat, for I could see the reflection of the lantern on its shiny wet surface as he swung it at his side. But his head and shoulders, like everything else out of doors, were lost in the fog. Only the luminous circle was visible advancing slowly along the road on the edge of the cliff. It stopped at the same spot as before, just over the way from the inn, and the man lifted the lantern so that I saw his face—a typical Squalkum face, grizzled and weather beaten, of an old man of course, and, ten chances to one, of a captain.

As he held up the light I noticed that he was standing close to the strange white post or pillar or whatever it was, which had puzzled me when I made my tour of exploration of the quaint old fishing village

during the afternoon. The old fellow's peculiar actions now deepened my mystification. It was an odd structure, for all the world like a coffin set up on end, of wood painted white, and some eight or ten feet high, by possibly eighteen or twenty inches square. There was evidently a little closet or cubby-hole in it, for I had found hinges and a keyhole on the side facing the sea, and about five feet from the ground. It was neither a sentry-box nor a hydrant nor a tree guard nor any one of the half dozen things that it might possibly have been had it been anywhere else and—different. I had meant to ask old Hawkins what it was, but forgot about it. And now, in the middle of the night, it suddenly loomed weird and perplexing out of the gloom as the rays from the lantern fell upon it, and my first curiosity respecting it came back at me immensely heightened.

The old man held the light above his head while he placed his ear against the side of the box as if he were listening to some sort of sound within. The light fell full upon him, and from where I stood in the window of the Hawkins House I could see the broad, strong face between the mass of gray whiskers and the dripping visor of his sou'wester. For half a minute the old captain's expression was as fixed and grim and serious as if he were on the bridge of a great liner and the night just what it was, but presently the muscles relaxed and I fancied that I caught a smile before the lantern was lowered and the grizzled head disappeared in the fog. I watched the receding light until the turn in the road cut it off from my view, and then stood thinking before the dying fire.

It occurred to me that each time that the old man's lantern had suddenly emerged from the mist, the clock had struck. Was there any connection between these two incidents? For no very rational purpose I decided to sit up until eleven, just to see if he came back again. The hour dragged wearily enough this time. I had read twice through the antique magazines and newspapers lying on the big table in the

inn living-room, so that I had to fall back upon my own thoughts. They were decidedly fatuous. Very soon I gave up trying to think at all about the momentous matter which had brought me thousands of miles from home to this uttermost end of God's country, and yielded to the growing fascination of trying to make out what on earth could be in that gruesome, coffin-shaped thing over the way, that the old captain should come creeping like a ghoul through the murk and stillness to put his ear to it and listen.

Finally, however, the clock did strike eleven. I laughed at myself for jumping up to see if the uncanny light was coming—but I looked just the same. It was very absurd, of course, but for the life of me I could not quite take to the idea of going to bed without first finding out what that white coffin contained, and why a tottering old man should come every hour on a beastly bad night, to put his ear to it and listen. Would he keep it up all night? As I drew back the curtain I

confess that I cherished the earnest hope that the old man would not come. I felt grave doubt as to my strength of will. If he did show up, I was morally certain that I would sit up another hour—just to see if he would return at midnight; and the depressing fear fastened itself upon me, that I might thus have to make a night of it. Laughing aloud at my own idiocy I jerked aside the curtain and rubbed the wet from the window.

There he was, all right! The light was coming, and on time! The whole thing had become positively fascinating. My

ancient mariner went through his ghostly performance as before, smiling when he heard—or was it because he did not hear?—whatever it was that sounded in the box. Again the swaying circle of misty light moved slowly back along the cliff and disappeared at the turn of the road. That settled it! I must sit up until midnight, when, if he came again, I would make bold to challenge him and learn what was in that coffin.

Stirring the embers I threw a couple of logs on the fire dogs, and pulled old Hawkins' own armchair in front of the hearth. I had scarcely settled myself for the long watch, however, when old Hawkins himself came into my mind as a possible way out of having to sit up. That hale old navigator had turned in at eight bells, leaving me, his only guest, to shift for myself in the low-pitched, rather smelly, but otherwise comfortable living-room, from which his own room opened. He was snoring now with the regularity and *timbre* of a fog-horn, when, as I say, he suddenly came

into my mind. Forming my resolution quickly I knocked at the captain's door, five or six times before he heard me.

"Hey? What's that? What's wrong aloft?" he sang out in a voice oddly suggesting rusty iron.

"It's only me, captain," I replied apologetically. "But there's an old man with a lantern prowling about—comes every hour—seems to expect to hear something in that queer looking box across the road."

"Oh, that's jest old Force-o'-Habit Mayhew—skysail gear a bit kinky, but timbers as sound as ever they was. Better turn in,



DRAWN BY E. BERT SMITH

Old Force-o'-Habit.

mister, fur it must be nigh mornin', and we'll be washin' down decks 'fore you've had a chance to warm up your bunk," laughed the captain.

"Well, good night then," I replied and went back to my speculations before the fire.

Force-o'-Habit, eh? That was the name of the lighthouse out on the reef where the tide rips ran so wild—the skipper of the sloop had pointed it out to me that morning, and I had been struck by the singular name. As the snoring had not begun yet in the captain's cabin, and the thought of the poor old chap with the kinky skysail gear prowling about at dead of night was beginning to get on my nerves, I ventured to make an effort to get more light. Tiptoeing to the door I listened. There was no sound of heavy breathing, so I tapped again.

"Ahoy there! What's it this time?" roared Hawkins.

"I'd like to know what is in the tall white box, that's all," I answered trying not to betray how intense my interest had now become.

"Oh, that's whar the 'lectric clock is what runs the flash light out to the reefs," replied the captain growing noticeably testy, "and the fog bell, too. Good night!"

"Good night, captain."

I went back to the fire and sat down. It was no use, however, to attempt to deceive myself into imagining that the mystery was solved. As a matter of fact, it was deepening. I stood the strain for about two minutes, and then, as the snoring still failed to begin, I returned to the captain's door and resumed my investigation without knocking.

"Old-Force-o'-Habit Mayhew has to attend to the electrical apparatus every hour, I suppose?" I suggested with no very great confidence in my own hypothesis.

"Not a durned bit of it!" thundered the captain as if hailing a distant sail on his weather bow in a gale. "What 'ud be the use o' havin' the mechanism, ef a man had to stand by to see that it run? Old Mayhew's thinkin' stays was carried away when them slick Alecks in the departmint put him out and put in that thar machine. It

like to 've killed him, and he's ben six pynts out o' his course ever sence. Good night."

"Good night, captain."

I took up my watch before the fire again. It was useless: I simply must continue my investigation before the captain was off again on his interrupted voyage. With the certain courage of a thoroughly determined man I returned to the captain's door.

"Will the old gentleman keep on coming to the box all night?" I asked.

"Yes—and what's more, all tomorrer, too, ef it stays thick," growled Hawkins from under the bed clothes. "Good night."

"Good night, captain!"

It was some minutes before I formulated my next question. No indications of sleep came from the captain's cabin.

"But why should he keep on coming to-morrow? Don't they put out all lighthouses after sunrise?"

"Did n't I tell ye that the machine runs the 'lectric fog bell, too?" retorted the captain with no effort to conceal his views on landlubbers. "Come, now, cast off!"

I cast off—for at least a minute. There was one more question, however, which really must be answered.

"But why does he bother to come to see if the machine is working, if he is no longer in charge of the light and the fog bell?"

"Jest old Force-o'-Habit's way—durn 'im!" snorted the captain in a way that precluded further conversation.

As it was quarter to 12 by this time I waited to see old Mayhew come to put his ear to the coffin—the more I thought of the whole thing the more it got on my nerves for some reason—and then I lit my candle and climbed up the companion-way to my little room under the roof. I was fast asleep in a jiffy, but I woke just as the clock down stairs was striking 4. I could not help it: I must satisfy myself that the old chap was faithful to his weird trust; at least one eye must pay the poor old fellow the silent tribute of watching him. So I got out of bed and groped my way to the dormer window. Force-o'-Habit had not failed. He was already standing by the box, with the lantern held high over his head, and his ear against the side. There was the same look of serious concern, then



DRAWN BY E. BERT SMITH

He suggested that I go out to the reef with him.

the smile, then only the circle of misty light moving off up the road. I got back into bed and was off in a moment, and when I woke again it was broad day.

My first thought was of the weather. Thank goodness, the rain was pouring on the shingles over my head, and this meant that the fog had lifted. Old Mayhew need not report for duty during the day! I felt strangely relieved by this thought, and quite forgot that the storm—it was blowing like the dickens out side and the rain whipped spitefully against my little window—meant another day's imprisonment in the stuffy and depressing living-room of the Hawkins House. Also, my gloomy anticipations of the indefinite number of lonesome days that I must wait for news of Brinsley's plans gave place to quite entrancing ones of a speedy meeting with old Force-o'-Habit Mayhew, who had somehow settled down as the permanent tenant of my mind.

"Oh, he'll be sartin to drop in with the rest o' the boys this evenin' after supper," Captain Hawkins assured me as I sat in

the kitchen—he called it the galley—watching him fry our ham and eggs for breakfast; "but like 's not you mayn't get a word out o' the old derelict, for he's no hand to blow, Mayhew ain't."

"Is there any connection between him and the lighthouse out on that ugly ledge—you know, the one that we pass on the starboard hand when running in here from up the straits?" I asked when I detected signs that Hawkins wanted to drop the subject.

"Any connection 'tween Force-o'-Habit Mayhew and Force-o'-Habit light?" retorted the captain laying down the frying pan and looking quizzically at me over his bone spectacles. "Why, Lord bless us, Mayhew is the lighthouse! 'Twas him fust burned a light out on that thar devil's own eye-tooth o' a reef—yes, and he kep' it aburnin' winter 'n summer fur a good ten year. Then the department built the lighthouse, and Mayhew run it, fog-horn and all, fur another thirty-four year, 'thout missin' a night, and never comin' ashore, 'cept once, in '79 to have every tooth in his mouth took out by a doctor

feller what was wrecked in the old *Cornelia B.*—fore-and-aft fourmaster, in lumber—and once, in '93 when he come ashore fur to bury his daughter Sally who'd allers lived out to the lighthouse with 'im. Any connection, you say, 'tween Mayhew and Force-o'-Habit light, bearin' sou' sou'-east from Macklin Spit light, and nor'west by nor' by two pynts west from whar we's astandin' now? 'S fur 's I know, they ain't no other light anywhars that is named fur the man who keeps it. The travelin' public don't give a cuss fur the lonely men who tends the lights what makes navergation possible, and no more do the skippers themselves, fur that matter, but the hull durned navergatin' world jest had to hear tell of old Force-o'-Habit, fur his name is down on the charts, and that's as it oughter be, fur he's the all-fired sticker to his post and ought n't never 'v be'n laid off to make way fur no 'lectric clockwork grimcracks what it only takes young Stubbs, the preacher's boy, a minute to wind up and turn on at sundown and off at sunup, no sir!"

It was good to see this show of local pride in the all-fired sticker to his post whom the charts had compelled the navigating world to hear tell of, and from the other elderly gentlemen in gray beards and dripping sou'westers, who dropped in to warm up during the course of the day, I gathered the still more pleasing knowledge, that old Force-o'-Habit Mayhew was an institution in which the whole community took pride. I was careful not to correct the general impression that I had journeyed across the continent to Cape Flattery for the sole purpose of paying my respects to the man who had made Squalkum Cove famous. And in truth, the inference was a fair one, for my very first words, on being presented to one captain after another, invariably referred to old Force-o'-Habit, the man, or the lighthouse.

"'Tain't likely he'll get 'round much before dog watch this evenin'," Captain Hiram Luce explained to me when I asked him what the chances were of my meeting Captain Mayhew, "fur after thirty-six hours 'o fog he'll like 's not sleep all day; but he's purty sure to set an hour or two with the boys tonight—that is, ef it don't come off thick again after dark. Anyhow,

mister, you ain't likely to git much out 'o old Force-o'-Habit hisself, fur he kinder got in the way 'o not talkin' much, livin' out to the reef forty year. Skysail halyards got fouled, too, when the department come nigh breakin' that methodical heart 'o his 'n by allowin' that a 'lectric clock was more regular than him and cheaper."

Even as Captain Hawkins and Captain Luce had said, the boys began to drop in soon after supper. A staunch lot of seasoned old salts they were, the whole half dozen of them bearing names that smelled strongly of Nantucket and Vineyard Haven and New Bedford and Wood's Holl. They had quit their native waters on the decline in the whaling industry, and come around the Horn half a century ago to become pioneers in the then beginnings of the Behring Sea sealing trade. Old Mayhew joined the circle around the fire shortly after sunset, and I, watching at the window for his coming, noticed that before entering the tavern he assured himself that the electric clock was running, by putting his ear to the white box over the way. Mine host did the honors when the old man entered the living-room.

"Cap'n, shake hands with Mr. Endicott—stoppin' to the hotel until some friends o' his 'n comes from somewhars down coast."

"Proud to know you, sir," said Captain Mayhew gripping my hand with his own broad and hard one. "Where from and where bound and what in?"

"From New York, for Squalkum Cove, in hopes," I laughed.

"York State, eh? I hev a brother back to York State—up 'round Uticy somewhars—maybe you know him. I'm from Edgartown, Marthy's Vineyard, myself, and proud to make your acquaintance, sir."

The ceremonies over, old Mayhew sat down, lighted his pipe, closed his clear blue eyes, and listened to the discussion without once opening his mouth during the session of the admiralty court. It developed that the rules of the high tribunal provided that each speaker be permitted to have his say out safe from interruption. Also it soon transpired that, although each member of the court spoke with no uncertain mind and evidently with the feeling

that he was handing down the verdict of final authority, each of the succeeding speakers differed from him and from each other. My education was sensibly advanced in the important questions connected with pelagic sealing, great circle sailing, and the advantages of fore-and-aft rigged schooners over the new steam sealing craft. On only one question was the court a unit: no man whose experience had been limited to the great lakes was qualified to become a master of any sea-going vessel.

"Messin' around a duck pond is one thing, and deep water navigation is another thing," said Captain Ezra Hewlett in summing up, and the court adjourned.

Captain Mayhew was the last one to leave the hotel. He seemed purposely to allow the others time to reach their several homes before he rose and buttoned his tarpaulin coat. I fancied that I knew his reason, when I spied upon his movements from the window and saw him cross the road and lean his head against the clock-tower. Satisfied that mere mechanism was still performing the duty which providence had manifestly intended that a rational being should perform, the old man looked wistfully out across the boiling tide rips to the winking flash-light three miles from shore, and then trudged slowly homeward through the stormy night.

Fortune smiled upon me in the morning. In the first place, the storm had blown itself out, and the Italian sky of the Straits of Juan de Fuca was cloudless. Then, too, I found old Hawkins in great good spirits—his temper, I had discovered, was a bit fluky—and with scarcely any leading by me, he told me Captain Mayhew's story. My luck held well, for when I stepped out of the door to fill my lungs with the delicious air of the early morning I saw old Force-o'-Habit himself talking to a half-grown lad who was busy with the electrical apparatus across the road. I strolled over to them, and the beardless exponent of advanced scientific ingenuity went into an elaborate and enthusiastic explanation of the economical and labor-saving contrivance, while the gray bearded conservative, after letting the youth talk himself out, closed the debate by quietly remark-

ing, "It ain't fur me to critcerize the department, but when it comes to protectin' of human life, give me a man every time and none o' your machines—that's Noah Mayhew! A machine ain't got no conscience, hev it? And ef it breaks daown, like this here one hev broke daown more 'n once, why then, it ain't got no idee o' the duty to report and ask fur no substoot, hev it?"

Young Stubbs went off winking knowingly at me and touching his forehead significantly—everybody in Squalkum Cove realized, it seemed, that old Mayhew's skysail halyards had got fouled after his dismissal from the service—and I feigned deep interest in the peculiar formation of the reefs which caused the treacherous tide rips off the point, in the hope that the old keeper would let me walk home with him and possibly be drawn into talking about his former lighthouse. He seemed nothing loath, and as we walked slowly along the bluff I listened rather indifferently to the old man's learned dissertation on currents and tide sets, for my mind was full of the story that Hawkins had told me.

Stripped of Hawkins' picturesque and breezy style, the story was simple. The brig on which Mayhew's young wife and their only child were coming to join the daring young sealing captain in his far new home, after making the long voyage from Boston safely, had been pounded to pieces on these terribly hungry Squalkum reefs on a pitch black night in 1860. The child was saved, but the wife was lost, and young Mayhew swore that no other ship would lose her way for want of a beacon on Squalkum reef. For all of ten years he rowed each night to hang the lantern on the pole that he had set up on the end of the reef. With the increase of shipping that came with the opening up of the Puget Sound country the authorities had finally erected the squat stone lighthouse and keeper's cottage, and the man who had got in the habit of tending the light was duly appointed keeper. There, with his daughter, he had lived, trimming the light and running the fog-horn and tending the flowers in his patch of a garden, from sheer force of habit never going ashore, until finally life had narrowed for him into just one thing—keeping the lighthouse on



DRAWN BY E. BERT SMITH

"Sally used to admire seein' flowers."

Squalkum reef. Then had come the introduction of mechanical devices, whereby such small beacons as this one of Force-o'-Habit might be economically run by electricity, a clock on the shore automatically regulating the flash and tolling the fog bell

in thick weather. Mayhew was curtly retired on a meager pension, and, though as Hawkins had said, his timbers were as sound as ever, it was easy for his neighbors to see that the old man's skysail gear was kinky and that his thinking stays

had been carried away in the tempest of wounded pride and uprooting of life-long habits, which had driven him ashore after all these years.

"Ef it wa'n't sinful to doubt the goodness o' Providence," said old Mayhew, when we stood on the headland whence the best view of the reefs was to be had, 'I'd be tempted to question why th' Almighty ever saw fit fur to make Squalkum reef no how. Jest look at it, sir. It sticks out into the straits like an arm three miles long, with the crook o' th' elbow thar' whar' you see them wicked rocks awash, and the lighthouse is the thumb on the hand out vonder. Wall, sir, that's a fall o' eighteen feet in the tide hereabouts, and when she's arunnin' in—she runs like all perdition was after her—why then, God help the skipper who don't hold off at least five miles, with Teilakush Head bearin' nor-nor'east and Grimsby light—showin' red fur twenty seconds, dark fur twenty, and white fur twenty—bearin' sou'west by sou' by three pynts west. The hull Pacific Ocean tries to get into Jooan der Fucy Straits to once, 'pears to me, and findin' it a tight squeeze, it kinder byles and fumes and whirls and twirls and swirls plumb agin Squalkum reef, with that thar death's arm astretchin' out fur to grab any durned fool skipper who don't hold off at least five miles to the northerd o' Force-o'-Habit light. Ain't the ways o' Providence puzzlin' to man?"

"I understand that you kept the light for some little time, captain," I said after a moment of reverent silence during which the old man stood with bared head. "You were instrumental in having the lighthouse built, were you not?"

"Wall, sir," replied he delighting me by not betraying his usual aversion to the subject of his devotion to the light, "it were this way. A brigantine—the *Hannah Stebbins*, Piggott, master, from Boston for Puget Sound, in general merchandise—come ashore on the reef, on the night o' March 19th, 1860, and went to pieces before mornin'. All hands was lost, 'ceptin' the mate and a little girl two years old. I was a young feller at that time, kinder sentimental and rebellious ag'in Providence, and the loss o' the *Hannah Stebbins* teched my heart like. So I got the notion to set a light—'twa'n't nuthin' more 'n a

lantern—out on the reef. Thar' did n't seem to be nuthin' fur me to live fur jest then, and I jest sorter got into the habit o' rowin' out to the reef every evenin' at slack tide, and habit is sech a coolin' thing 'round a man's will, that I jest kep' agoin' out to set my beacon night after night fur ten years. In them days thar' wa'n't none o' this daily passin', inward and outward bound, o' steamers from every port on the globe like thar' is today, but the few coast-wise schooners and sech like bottoms what did nose into the straits was powerful glad when they picked up Force-o'-Habit light, as the boys began to call Mayhew's beacon that never went out from sundown to daylight. Then the departmint jedged it was about time fur to build a proper lighthouse, and they done me the honor to call it after me—it's on the charts, ef you've took the pains to study 'em—and they 'pynted me keeper, too. I got in the habit o' stayin' out by the light, and 's fur's I kin remember, I did n't never come ashore, 'cept once when I come to hev my teeth took out, and once when I come to—to—Can you make make out the funnel on that steamer, sir? My eyes ain't what they was, but th' *Empress o' India* is due, and that cutter bow is her'n, I'm sure."

"And when did they put in the electrical machine?" I asked after we had come to the conclusion that the steamer was the expected *Empress of India*.

"Two years ago," he replied with a falling inflection which presaged an end of our talk.

"Progress works many changes," I remarked, at a loss for something to say, but unwilling to let the old man carry out his evident intention to go home.

"Progress?" he exclaimed turning back and facing me. "Ef progress means the elimernation o' God's reasonin' creatures, and the idee that wheels and springs and batt'ries was intended fur to hev sense enough and judgment enough and patience enough fur to be trusted to protect life, why then, life's as cheap as them sizzlin', onnery, unsartin' 'lectric toys that they're puttin' whar' they used to hev lights that was lights, kep' by God-fearin' men that was men."

"You consider the electric light unfit for this purpos, then?" I suggested.

"I do!" he thundered. "Ef it was a million candle-power, onless thar' was a man to watch it I would n't never trust to no 'lectric light. No, sir! Sperm oil, hourly inspection, the habit o' doin' things regular, and a Christian white man to keep it—them is the only things that will ever make a lighthouse."

"This one has worked satisfactorily for two years, has it not?" I urged, too eager for the fine old fellow to go on, to realize that my air of scepticism might wound him.

"It's gone out at least five times—on thick nights, too. I've sorter got into the habit o' settin' up on thick nights, and as luck would hev' it, I happened to be passin' that redicklous clock thing, and I heerd that the wheels was stopped, and went and reported it to the babe in arms that runs Force-o'-Habit light in these days—Lord save us all! Only fur me bein' in the habit o' thinkin' about the light on thick nights, thar'd maybe ben some vessel hard and fast on Squalkum pynt in the mornin'. Look across them tide rips now, sir, and tell me ef you think that any cable laid plumb across them raspin' shark's teeth ain't likely to part some o' these fine days, or leastways, hev' the guttyperchy all wore off it?"

We walked on, talking of many things not connected with lighthouses, for after his burst of wrath the old man would not let me allude to the subject.

I saw Captain Mahew a great deal during the next few days, and as a result we became such good friends that he himself suggested that I go out to the reef with him at the next slack tide. He had got into the habit, he said, of rowing out to his old home now and then. From others I learned that his now and then was really every day. On reaching the tiny island on which the lighthouse stood I was surprised to find that the place had not the deserted look that I expected that it must have after its solitary inhabitant had been gone two years. The little garden was abloom with sweet old country flowers. A bed of nasturtiums nestled about the base of the tower, and there were honeysuckle and convolvulus trained over the latticed porch of the cottage.

"My gal, Sally, used to admire seein'

flowers growin' all over the hull place, and I've kinder got into the way o' messin' 'round among 'em sence she went away," explained Mayhew.

The new iron structure on which the electric light and fog bell were placed stood far out on the point of the ledge, and I observed that the care bestowed upon everything else on the island did not extend to its neighborhood, for seaweed had collected in great slimy masses about its four legs, and a manifestly recent change in the line of the low stone garden wall excluded the intruder from the sacred precincts. If the garden had surprised me, what was my amazement on entering the cottage, to find that it was as neat and cozy and comfortable as if, indeed, a tidy housewife still presided over its diminutive rooms. In silence I followed the old man as he showed me through the house. To the least detail everything spoke of method, long service, and scrupulous care—yes, and of subtle, elusive memories and the simple loves of a simple life. Then he led me up the few stone steps to the lantern. The brasses shone as if having been burnished that very morning; the lenses gleamed and sparkled with rainbow colors; and the two oil cans on the burnished tray were full, for I slyly lifted them. The erstwhile keeper seemed about to go into a lengthy explanation of the lantern and its rotating gear, but after turning to the little cupboard hanging on the wall as if he had just thought of something in it that he wanted to show me, he suddenly started down the steps—and I thought that I understood.

On the next day but one I received the long awaited letter from Brinsley. He had missed connections everywhere, but fortunately so, he wrote, for he had reached Seattle just in time to meet his old friend Captain Erskine of the Geodetic Survey service, and instead of having to run out to the cape in some Port Townsend sloop as I had done, he would come on the government tender *Petrel*—altogether a delightful arrangement. We would then hike back into the mountains immediately on his arrival, and probably be able to decide on the proposition within a week. It was the unanimous opinion of the captains at that night's session of the Squalkum Cove ad-



E. Bert Smith

DRAWN BY E. BERT SMITH

The old oil light burned out across the night.

miralty court at the Hawkins House, that the *Petrel* could make the run from Seattle to Force-o'-Habit light in seven hours, and this would bring her off the point before sundown on the following day.

The night turned out sloppy, and by morning the wind was blowing a good thirty miles an hour from the southeast, and freshening every moment. By noon things were decidedly nasty in the straits, and no less than six gentlemen with master's papers informed me that the glass was powerful low and going lower. By evening, the very wise ones who had pooh-poohed my early anxieties, expressed the opinion that Captain Erskine had doubtless put into Port Angeles, if indeed he had not entirely abandoned the idea of pitting the saucy but cranky *Petrel* against the "dirtiest mess o' weather sence the *Northern Light*, British ship, for Honylooler, in lumber, piled up on Noosqualmie Shoal, last December a year ago."

As the previous night must have seen old Mayhew making his regular hourly visit to the electric clock, I knew that he would probably sleep all day, but I did expect that as soon as it was dark he would be sure to keep his ear on the clock, since he could not keep his eye on the light in such weather. Seven and then 8 o'clock passed, however, and the old man failed to come. When 9 o'clock also passed and still he did not show up, I began to feel nervous. Watching my chance, I stole out of the tavern and across the road. The clock was ticking all right, and I fancied that I could see the glimmering beacon out on the reef, now and then through the driving storm. Relieved somewhat, but yet secretly wishing that old Force-o'-Habit had not hit upon this night, of all nights, to make an exception to his prudent rule of mistrusting mere machinery when life was at stake, I went back to the hotel and to bed. My last observation from the window of my room served to comfort me, for the fury of the gale seemed to be abating; but I did wish that somebody would keep tabs on that conscienceless electric clock against which I was beginning to cherish a feeling of positive dislike. What a night for those hungry shark's teeth along the reef to saw through the puny cable on which hung possibly a score of lives!

Altogether, then, I was not in a very happy frame of mind when at last I managed to fall asleep. I cannot say how long I may have slept, when I was awakened by Hawkins bellowing to somebody out of doors. I stumbled to the window and looked out. A dozen lanterns were bobbing about in the rain in front of the house. Many excited men were all talking at once. Dressing quickly I ran down stairs and out on the cliff, where all Squalkum Cove was now assembled. Captain Hiram Luce had happened to take an observation at about half-past twelve, and discovered a vessel bearing down on the reef, for that wretched electrical contraption had broken down. We could see the lights of the doomed ship now not more than a mile off the reef. Every man on the cliff was volunteering, when Luce announced his intention to take out the life boat if the ship ran ashore. I was searching among the oil-skins and whiskers for old Mayhew, when a score of hoarse voices sent up a mighty shout. The light—the orthodox, steady old oil light—had suddenly flashed out across the night, and instantly we could see that the skipper of the devoted vessel had realized the horror of his position. Jamming his helm hard down, he had come about and was scurrying like mad, close hauled and heeling over in the half gale, out of the jaws of death. As the light revolved and its beams fell on the struggling craft we saw that she was the *Petrel*. Something must have gone wrong with her engines, for she was carrying every inch of her emergency canvas, scarcely more than enough to give her steerage way. And Force-o'-Habit light was revolving and flashing as regularly and steadfastly as it had done for thirty-four years. And it flashed and revolved until sunrise, according to the regulations of the department.

"But how on earth did the old brick get it into his head to go out and spend the night at his old post?" asked Captain Erskine when later we were talking over his narrow escape, seated around the blazing fire which Hawkins had piled on his hospitable hearth to welcome the distinguished officer.

"Oh, that's jest old Force-o'-Habit's

way," replied Captain Luce. "None o' th' others hain't knowed it, but that ain't be'n a real bad night sence he was laid off by the department, that Noah Mayhew ain't stood by his old light, ready fur to set her agoin' ef that thar durned fool 'lectric thing was to go to smash. Foggy nights he only jest kep' his ear on the clock, but whenever the glass fell below twenty-eight-fifty all of a sudden like, he allers rowed out to the reef at slack tide, and stood by 'til mornin'."

Not even Captain Erskine himself could

prevail upon the old man to come ashore to receive the substantial purse which the officers and crew of the *Petrel* subscribed for his benefit. His sole request was that he might be permitted to tend the old light until the new cable could be brought from Seattle to replace the one which had parted. The cable was never brought, for Erskine promptly filed a report at headquarters, strongly advising the abandonment of the electric light, and the return to the use of the original oil light, on what is officially known as Force-o'-Habit Reef.

## The Wedding Gift

BY OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR

It was inevitable that they should talk of Alva, the girl having characteristically missed the appointment and Raeburn experiencing in her absence a loverly desire to make her the exclusive topic of discussion. He declaimed, therefore, on this congenial theme as he strode up and down the angular and precarious route that the arrangements of Kate Hallock's studio afforded. It was at that point in the bland, leisurely afternoon when the sun, to the painter's usual discomfiture, streamed in sudden abundance through the high window. She, however, sat idly today and in the shadow, her fair, keen, serious face somewhat relaxed from its usual alertness, her air one of light, facile attention. She felt it unnecessary to interpose a comment; and was, besides, engaged in recalling an evening when she had heard Raeburn deliver a speech to promote, immediately, a local somebody's election, and ultimately, she supposed, his own not yet defined political ambition. It had struck her, oddly, that there was the same tone in his voice now as then; a professional note, suggestive, in any other man, of a habitual and hearty satisfaction with platitude.

Suddenly the man's glance fell upon a large photograph standing upon a shelf, one so aptly illustrating his remarks that he took it down to derive its full illumination. It portrayed a young woman in evening dress, wearing a wide-brimmed hat, the attitude one, perhaps, of dispropo-

portionate self-possession. Although, according to the demands of its aesthetic period, it was a deftly sensational arrangement of blank, dim, spaces and sporadic high-lights, the photograph appeared curiously to deride the artist's laboriously distributed emphasis by giving an impression, merely, that the young woman had over-worked her dressmaker. The agreeable brown vagueness obscured, it is true, the details of stitch and fold; but one nevertheless distinctly felt the measure of their accumulation. It may have been this that Raeburn dimly perceived and definitely resented; and that led him, now, to seat himself in the sunlight that he might study and deprecate the portrait to his full content.

His hostess, in these intervals of their talk, longed for a less severe accuracy of vision. By a natural gift of insight, which she had found of questionable benefit, she was able, in a single glance, to see, to judge and, where it was necessary, to forgive, and she acknowledged it a dreary matter continually to exercise both a judicial and a remissive function toward the objects of one's personal interest. She noted now, even, though with a reluctant glance, the blunt traces, upon Raeburn's tired face, of his swift and arrogant success. His young distinction seemed to her to be already fading; he had paid an ample price for his triumphs. Unwillingly, she followed his reflections as he sat in an ab-

sorbed study of chiffon and ostrich feathers rendered in soft tones of sepia. He was impatient, she knew, to claim publicly, as his own, this showy midget with her thousand dainty appetites for luxury. He desired that blithe shimmer of expensive fabrics to pervade his house, to become a permanent ornament of his life. He had arrived, she suspected, at that delicate point where, fearing lest gratified ambition have, after all, a grim emptiness, a man hastens to transmit its substantial elements to a wife who shall find it of greater worth than he. More than this, he was also "in love" with Alva Beveridge; and he invested her, therefore, the wise Kate was aware, with all the attributes commonly held desirable in a bride. Encased within their distracting sheath of tailoring and millinery, he saw, for instance, an adequate, if not too exacting regard for himself; that virginal innocence celebrated by the poets, and that domestic genius so becoming to a woman and so prone, we are told, to leap to competent maturity at the touch of a lover's hand. . . .

"But most people," replied Kate, in her direct way, to Raeburn's last comment, "have thought it very like her."

"That may be." He replaced the picture, as if to indicate that for the time his contempt had spent itself. "You and I, at least, know better. There is, in fact, no Alva there. She's obliterated to a dot."

In crossing the room, Kate had paused for a moment at her easel to add a brief touch or two to a background that was puzzling her. Raeburn, watching the beauty of her quick efficient movements, conceived precisely the idea that she from time to time had dimly dreaded.

"Why," he demanded, suddenly, "have you never painted her portrait?"

Kate could not affect to misunderstand the pronoun; neither could she, in her surprise, contrive a reply.

Raeburn smiled confidently. "Is n't that curiously like you artists? You admit that Alva is an altogether beautiful girl; you have known her for years—"

"But you don't understand—she's too pretty!" broke in Kate, a little sharply. "I've never even tried to paint a pretty girl; it's not in my line, you know."

"Modesty is a vice with you," urged

Raeburn, accepting her protest literally. "I know that you could do it." He looked at her in silence for a moment: her fair head tipped at perhaps a not wholly unconscious angle of abstracted interest, her arm moving in short, determined, strokes. "Kate, you must do it; you really must. Suppose I beg you to, as an old friend. We have n't been in the way of asking favors from each other, but I'll ask this one as—as a wedding present. A wedding present for us both. You will?"

He stood by her side, following the process of her workmanship with a zeal he had never displayed before. Kate did not drop her brush. "Are you then so utterly ignorant of your future wife's *trousseau* that you fancy there would be time in the three weeks before your wedding—"

"But afterwards—"

There was a pause just long enough to be unpleasantly perceptible; and Raeburn, who had not the habit of supplication, flushed in resentment at the unaccountableness of it. And Kate Hallock had always been a woman one depended on.

"Forgive me," she was saying, with an obvious effort to regain the accustomed note, "but you know that's something I've always held out for: this choosing of my own subjects. Some day I may learn to please others besides myself but now—"

"You are quite right. I beg your pardon, of course, for being insistent. We won't speak of it again." He had turned to leave.

Kate faced him. No; he was merely hurt in the petulant fashion of the schoolboy from whom a holiday has been withheld. He was as far as ever from suspecting what he had asked, or why it had been refused, or why, indeed, it was now to be granted. It was not too late for the capitulation that must be made to seem an airy, superficial thing.

"Nonsense," she laughed brightly. "I—only tried to see whether you really wanted the portrait. I'm glad to do it. Ask Alva, if she is willing, to let me know when she can come. And Joel"—she faced him frankly now—"I hope you know that I would never refuse anything that in friendship you should ask of me."

That the compensating essential of a



DRAWN BY ANGUS MAC DONALD

"Suppose I beg you to as an old friend."

sacrifice is its recognition by someone else is a formula based perhaps upon an overestimate of human weakness. Kate Hallock's promised gift to the man who had unconsciously been so richly significant in her life, at all events sublimely lacked this mitigating, if vulgar element. The implications of her performance lay unperceived. And she herself, after springing with her lightly spoken promise to the point of Raeburn's demand, had not once doubted her ability to carry through the undertaking or to prevent, as she put it to herself, that anyone should ever truly understand; Raeburn himself, of course, least of all.

Not a straw of obstruction she knew would be placed in her way by Alva Bevridge. If Raeburn, crassly considered, was to marry for the undeniably superficial pleasures his wife's presence would be capable of affording, the girl's motive supplied a suitable converse, since what other aim had she than to be admired? That Alva would agree to sit for her portrait was therefore the safest assumption in the world. Yet Kate, numbly waiting, scarcely expected, a few days, only, after she had seen Raeburn, to perceive at her door that familiar jingle of pendent gold-trinkets, that faint, familiar perfume that conveniently did duty as a kind of pseudo-individuality. Kate had not arrived so far as to plan the work concretely, having been engaged with certain moral and aesthetic barriers which were first to be cleared; and she had not a definite reply ready for the prompt:

"How will this dress do, Kate? Or there's another, to be sent up later. Joel thinks I ought not to wear this before the wedding. Have you ever heard of anything so absurd? When shall you exhibit the picture?"

Significantly, each had assumed without question that the portrait was to include the entire figure. It would, indeed, have seemed almost brutal to detach the girl's inconspicuous head from the trappings that made up her personality. On the contrary, a quite impersonal desire awoke in Kate as she saw her model standing at her mercy before her to transfer to canvas, without slur or extenuation, that substanceless, vacuous fluff and rustle. No

one knew better than Kate herself that she had never achieved anything beyond the mediocre; here was the chance, by an unprecedented flash of candor, to excel. Not until this moment had she seen the danger of her opportunity, the danger of betraying Raeburn to himself.

A sudden cloud of confusion obscured, even to herself, her immediate purposes. Intricate indeed was her part in the situation that had the air of being so frankly simple. And already she was being impounded—

"You can begin it today, can you not?"

This had always been Alva's way, airily to disregard individual proprietorship of time.

"Yes. Please sit in the big chair for a moment and let me study out the pose."

The familiar phrase was used to disguise the real nature of the preliminary process. The problem of emphasis, of selection, in the case of this little, tinkling personality, was one of no ordinary difficulty. The clue lay of course in Raeburn's preferences; it was to his eyes that the work must be adjusted. He had condemned the photographer's comparatively faithful performance, but even without this proof, Kate was quite sufficiently aware that he had no wish to see Alva as she was. But what, precisely, was his vision of her? To define that, clearly, once for all, must be the preface of the enterprise.

"Please try sitting again, Alva, more easily," suggested Kate, in a carefully professional tone. She had felt a sudden terror lest the girl read her thoughts.

The thick, heavily-trimmed folds of velvet reaccommodated themselves to the little figure that already seemed to assume the arrogant pose of self-conscious matronhood. Lacking, as she did, the uncomfortable power of clairvoyance, Alva was, for her part, thoroughly enjoying the experience. She made, indeed, an appreciable effort to live up to it and remembered, every few minutes, to give an extra jot of stiffness to the position of her chin or shoulder. It was as if she wished to make it unmistakeable that it was the painter's task to portray no expectant girl, but a woman of asserted dignity.

Still Kate dabbled noncommittally at her canvas, while her intent eyes searched

Alva's minutely symmetrical face. She dreaded lest she find, after all, no solid basis of reality upon which to cast the transfiguring veil in which she must dress the girl for her bridegroom. Yet where did it lie? In the lines of the head and face, with their hard, bright youthfulness, which maturity would fail to soften or alter but which age would suddenly smite an unlovely decay? In her bright brown eyes, stonily convex, like marbles, refracting the sympathetic glance? Or in her little soft mouth that could smile, for coquetry, but could not laugh?

Kate checked herself. What if she saw in the girl a thousand such repellent weaknesses? It was in a quite different spirit that she must paint her, and that promptly.

"Do you always work so slowly, Kate?" Alva's tone was of disapproval, rather than of candid inquiry. She suspected that she was being slighted.

Kate understood and smiled a little. "I am farther along than you think." She gently restored the girl's confidence. "When you come again, you shall see how quickly the paint will fly."

Alva never concerned herself about transitions of subject. "You know, I suppose," she went on in an indescribable calm tone of complete possession, "that Joel is likely to be given a place on the Democratic ticket?"

"Ah! already?"

"I have encouraged him to work for it," Alva's expression was serious, responsible, complacent. "It would be hardly worth while for him to hold a city office, except that it may lead—oh, anywhere, you know. That is my idea. I don't want him to be just a nameless lawyer."

"It strikes me he's appallingly successful, prosperous."

Alva smiled. "If you were marrying him, you would feel differently." Already she was mistress of the tone in which certain types of married women assign the spinster to her obscurer place. "Now I am very practical in my ambition for Joel. So far as being rich and successful is concerned, he naturally considers it his duty to be that, now he is to be married. But I want him to have power, position, that sort of thing."

"You think he needs a spur, then?" Kate's pale cheeks flushed.

"Oh, all men do. But I shall not let Joel fall behind. I," with a pious intonation, "believe in him."

Kate said nothing. But the valiant mood in which she had wished to paint the portrait had deserted her.

With the portrait nearly finished, Kate's spiritual strength found reinforcement in the consciousness of an unmistakably distinct success. A hundred times daily she had accused herself of hardness in her own silent estimate of Alva. But here, in the only connection that mattered, she had, it appeared, retrieved herself. None of those little vices of the soul to which, in the girl's own presence, Kate was so constantly sensitive, had appeared, she knew, to mar the arch fairness of the creature whom she had so lightly, skillfully set against a background of dull bronze. If any device could invest Alva with a factitious humanity, the painter had reasoned at the outset, it would be that of a metallic background.

It was not, however, that she had permitted herself the liberty of a moral "re-touching" of her subject. Rather had she literally painted, not from the model who, in complacent garniture, sat before her, but from one that, existing somewhere in Raeburn's fancy, it had inordinately strained her singular gift of perception to realize in detail. And she felt that there had been no fault in the fulfilling of her purpose. The woman whom the canvas held was, to the least implication, the woman whom Raeburn believed himself about to marry.

Three days before the wedding, Alva was to come for the last sitting. Already the girl had repented a little of having so promptly ceded this opportunity to a painter relatively obscure. The nearer, in fact, she came to being Mrs. Raeburn, the more fully she realized her worthiness of supreme artistic treatment; but she now thought of the deserved distinction as postponed, merely. Kate noticed that Alva had this, at least, in common with most young women on the eve of marriage, that her thoughts were almost exclusively of the future. Rupture with her past had been as effortless as it was complete. And



DRAWN BY ANGUS MAC DONALL

The trappings that made up her personality.

her more or less literal confessions were already a strangely prophetic counterpart of those of the actual bride. It was her delight to enumerate the details of life or of dress which Raeburn would or would not permit her. An unlikely woman to submit to an actual restraint, it was her mysteriously agreeable dissipation to flaunt the symbols of a purely nominal thralldom.

The hour of sitting came and went, yet Kate noted it without chagrin. She recalled that to keep an appointment at this season Alva would require no small margin of time. Indeed, as she stood by her window, trying to force her tired eyes to follow the scant interests of the street below, she had never been so tolerant of delay. Meanwhile the portrait, in its dark corner, must await uncovering until Alva should arrive.

Kate admitted but contemned her weakness in finding the thing an uncomfortable presence. Except during her concentrated periods of work upon it, she had never once looked at the portrait. For allied reasons, she had avoided, during these weeks, any possible opportunity of meeting Raeburn. Although, for that matter, as Alva had casually informed her, almost no one had seen him. The man had been working desperately, she gathered, in order to secure even the brief respite of his wedding journey. His own work, consisting mainly of "corporation cases," was heavy and insistent, and in the light of his new ambition, his political affiliations demanded a fresh and particular excess of devotion.

The afternoon was very bare, very long.

Each time that she glanced at the clock, Kate listlessly made a fresh calculation. The hours rolled heavily away until now there was but a half-hour more of daylight. Could she work quickly enough to finish it if Alva should come now? Curiously, it had not once occurred to her that the girl might fail her altogether.

"Kate! Kate!"

There was a quick tapping of tiny heels in the hall outside. Then, without waiting for an invitation, the door was swung open and somewhere, within a redundancy of feathers, she saw Alva's rigid child-face, worn, disappointed, even, she afterward remembered, angry.

"I suppose it is too late?"

There was a new, harsh quality in her voice as the girl made the sharp demand.

"For today, yes. But I have been thinking—I believe I can finish it without you, after all. Don't worry."

The girl gave the impression of having been worsted in some rather ignoble conflict. Kate found in herself unsuspected depths of warm compassion.

"My dear child, I am afraid you must be very tired," she suggested, softly, trying to draw the other's wraps from her. "Lie here for a little."

But Alva's difficulties, it appeared, did not include a consciousness of fatigue. She chose to sit upright on the edge of a stiff chair. It seemed hard for her to speak: as if some unwelcome knowledge palpably choked her expression.

"Joel," she announced, presently, "is ill. He has given out, broken down, completely—completely." She raised her strained voice a little for emphasis. "It's from overwork."

"Oh!" Kate's voice fluttered in her throat.

"Can't you see what that means? Our lives are ruined. Now Joel must go away immediately, the doctor says. So we are to be married on Tuesday, as we had planned, but quietly, and sail on Wednesday's steamer. We may be gone a year. We are giving up everything. Joel offered to—to go alone, to break the engagement. You can imagine what would have been said!"

"But—they think he will recover his strength in Europe?"

"Oh, yes; but you know the sort of places we shall have to stay in, with old ladies and little dogs and early bedtime."

"You—" Kate stopped. One could not read homilies to Alva; still less could one re-make her.

"Don't attempt to be reproving, Kate, or consoling either!" broke out Alva, who had caught the note of protest. "No one but myself knows the tragedy of this. Think of my wedding things, the house we've rented, Joel's affairs, my plans for the winter. Everybody will have forgotten us when we get back; and we shall be beggars, I suppose."

"Poor little creature!" thought Kate, in a genuine pity for the girl who could not even comprehend what she was essentially to miss. She knew of no more cruelly derisive stroke of fortune than that which was now separating her friends at the very moment when, according to their own anticipations, it united them. What, under these conditions, would they have to give each other? She tried to see them in their European refuge. Raeburn as invalid, Alva as nurse. But the picture had too many points of incongruity; it was almost grotesque.

"Oh, I am very sorry for you both," she said, sincerely. "Very, very sorry."

Then, with an irresistible impulse to wrench, if possible, some drop of humanity from the girl, she crossed to where Alva sat, in a rigidity expressive of her highest temperamental pitch, and kissed her.

"I will write you very often," she promised, "and tell you the little things that happen, among the people we know. And I shall know that you will be very busy taking good care of Joel, and walking with him, and enjoying things with him, and I shall not expect answers."

The lines in the little face softened a little. "You will? Oh, don't forget, will you? For that is precisely what people never do, write the little things one wants to hear. I shall be very grateful to you, Kate." Quite spontaneously, she caught the other's hand and caressed it.

But Kate, though she had to keep her head turned to hide the betraying tears, did not release her. She had a bargain to make with the girl, a bargain for her pity.

"You are young, Alva, to care for an

invalid constantly." It was hard to choose the words that must tell their meaning so obliquely. "Are you sure you will know how to do it? Do you realize how patient you will have to be—how careful?"

Surely she might venture as much as this; and again she kissed the smooth, round cheek, as if in an attempt to transfer to this brittle, unmalable nature, something of the essence of tenderness.

"I imagine you see that it is a good deal for me to undertake," admitted Alva, with an altogether new humility. But in a moment she had reverted to her standpoint. "Joel should have foreseen it," she said, petulantly, "He had no right to overwork. Men are like that. He should have thought of me."

It was late autumn, high noon of a day of mocking sunshine, reckless, impertinent breezes, consternation both among stately tree-tops and trumpery news-stands. In an ecstatic incredulity of the scenes about him, scenes bright, clear-cut, somewhat shrilly eloquent, Raeburn walked briskly from street to street, for the delight, among many others, of noting the convincing sequence of the signposts. To his hungry perceptions, this one detail seemed to make valid and authentic the panorama that might otherwise be but a deception, a "symptom," merely. He had, in this dreary year, known so many such. But there was a beautiful congruity in this new picture; even the shop windows, lavish, cheerful, friendly, American, were good to look in. Here was a policeman whom he knew and who remembered him, and who expanded genially at his greeting. With a glad, half-smiling curiosity Raeburn looked into all the faces that he met, intent, keen, cheerful, faces, he thought them, in this mood of his; faces of men and women who were happily able to take this good, bright, city for granted. But they did not look at him in return; their preoccupation allowed him to feast upon their agreeable lineaments to his soul's content. He walked on and on.

It was thus that before she was aware of him, he happened to see Kate Hallock, a slim, familiar figure, with a close hat set above heavy braids of pale hair. Her expression was absorbed and she would have

missed him altogether had he not, with frank pleasure, stopped squarely in front of her.

"It is good to see you."

Surprise made her speak slowly, hesitatingly.

"You are at home again,—and well? No one has told me."

"We got in yesterday. Oh, I have been miserably homesick, Kate, I can assure you. If you know how good it is to be here again. It's a humiliating thing to be snatched away from life for a year."

"That seems mockery to us who are chained here. We have little sympathy for you fault-finding travelers."

"Ah, I don't need it I'm at home again." Raeburn was almost gay.

There was a little pause.

Kate ventured bravely: "And Alva—she wrote so seldom—"

"She is well—and glad to be here. It has inevitably been hard for her."

Then there was, on both their parts, an instinctive and uncalculated swerving into other paths of discussion. A direct impression, through Raeburn, of his wife, Kate nervously avoided.

As it was, she permitted herself, for a few moments, as they walked rapidly together, blindly crossing car-tracks and threading sidewalk throngs, an agitated enjoyment of Raeburn's spirited society. Then it came to her that she had a belated duty to discharge; one that had lost its emphasis and of which she must now, she feared, rather lamely rid herself.

"You will come in, will you not?" she said, in a not quite natural voice, as they reached the street where she lived. "I have something to show you."

His response was fairly impetuous. Kate could hardly share in the man's obvious delight; it seemed excessive, disproportionate. She feared for him the reaction.

"Oh, it was always so charming here!" Raeburn exclaimed, as he entered. "Really, Kate, do you know this helps me more to believe I'm at home again, in my own country, than anything else I've seen."

"But all this is an old story. You have n't asked to see what I have to show you."

"Oh, I make no further demands; I am quite satisfied."

"I kept it," she explained, as she drew



DRAWN BY ANGUS MAC DONALL

"It was for me you did this?"

out the canvas and placed it before him on an easel, "to finish it, you remember, after you were gone. But now it shall be sent you."

"Alva!" he exclaimed. Then: "Why, no, it is not she. Then, who—"

"Oh, at least you might pretend to recognize it," she protested, lightly, "after I have done my best. But I am sorry if it is so—"

She was unable to finish the sentence as she caught the stern intentness with which Raeburn regarded the portrait. Then a cry almost escaped her as she divined what it meant: that the gift had come too late. A year ago, it would have seemed to him an inspired confirmation of his joy. Now it was merely a paradox. But the odd thing was that the longer he looked the more like her it became. Or rather, not so much like her, the present Alva, as like someone he had known once: the Alva whom he had wanted to marry, whom he

had married. But a human being cannot, even Alva could not, so change in a year's time. Where lay the mystery of it?

These, or something like them, were the thoughts that Kate saw pass, like swift-flying clouds, across his eyes. Then, suddenly, as he looked from one to the other, she knew, that by some intuition now first born in this once so arrogant, unseeing creature, he understood. She did not need his low, vehement:

"Kate! It was for me you did this—"

Nor did he, now that she was at last revealed to him, demand that one candid, full-hearted assurance of a lifetime—

"Yes, Joel. I did it for you."

But the look that they gave each other endured for a moment only. For in the next, they had turned from the portrait that had so importunately told its story, and were talking, blindly and not quite lucidly, of something far off, unintimate, prosaic.

## His Friend, the American

BY LEN LOW

About the first thing Wah Kee could remember, was being led by his mother, Tia Tai, out into the sunshine of the back porch. He remembered how he had cried and clung to her silken blouse when she held him high, to view for the first time the great world of roofs and chimneys glistening under the rays of the balmy spring sunshine. It had frightened him then, but afterward it became his delight and his one source of happiness, and at every opportunity he would raise the inner curtain and push the door gently so that it would not arouse his mother and crawl out into that other world.

True, that world was hedged in by a tall wire netting, but this did not obscure Wah Kee's vision, or lessen the strange noises that arose from the thronging streets below. The smoke rolling from some high chimney, the shrieking whistles, the tolling bells, were wonders of childish interest. There were flowers, too—geraniums with pink and red blossoms, and long, sickly stemmed chrysanthemums—

all in boxes on which were written strange characters. Years afterward, when he had learned the ways of the Americans, he knew these characters spelled "SOAP."

Once a great black cat slid down a near-by wall, sending him screaming to his mother, but afterward the cat and he became great friends, the cat waiting patiently for the scraps of rice and fish Wah Kee would bring to it. As he grew older he was sometimes allowed to sit out on this porch in the evening with his mother and the fat man that wore a little silk cap with a red button at the top. This man would bring him candy and sometimes a banana, pull his little queue and laugh at his wry face. Gradually Wah Kee began to call this man "Father."

Early in life, Wak Kee began to show a strangely dual character; the one dominating was a purely aggressive, unconquerable spirit of impious deviltry. This often got him into trouble, for when under the influence of this impishness, no effort of his fertile mind was left at rest in devising

means for displaying himself. Once, indeed, when the gentle Tia Tai had refused him some trifling request, he broke the little image of Buddha, the ancestral God, and threw the burning candles and punk sticks into the street, and overturned the burning incense, to the righteous horror of Tia Tai, who in despair, called on Wong. Of the wrath of that honored being Wah Kee never forgot.

"You! a son of mine and draw the wrath of the tailless dragon upon you! Go now, eat of the salted rice and dine of the fish without oil!"

But so humble and repentant was Wah Kee, and so well did he repeat the long verses of the song of Confucius, that his indulgent parent straightway brought him a large kite with four wings, and absolved him from further penance.

The greatest joy of all to Wah Kee was when his father would allow him to come down the long stairway and into the great store. He was satisfied at first to sit back in some secluded corner and watch with glowing interest the coming and going of the throngs. Sometimes a strangely dressed man would come into the store, talk and laugh with his father, and buy great boxes of tea and sacks of rice.

One day, when Wah Kee was in the store, this man entered leading a white-haired boy about Wah Kee's size, and while the fathers passed from bin to bin examining the tea, Wah Kee and the white-haired boy eyed each other. Gradually they drew closer and to Wah Kee's surprise, the white-haired boy made an ugly face at him. Wah Kee reciprocated with one that surpassed it; then the white-haired boy reached forth and seizing Wah Kee's dangling queue, gave it a vicious pull.

In an instant the store was in confusion; the oriental and Anglo-saxon lads were writhing on the floor, scratching and striking like two cats. The fathers pulled them hastily apart, Mr. Perry laughing heartily, but Wong was full of anger at the actions of his son.

"What for you act like that?" said he speaking in English, forgetting for the instant that Wah Kee could not understand a word.

"Go, beg pardon." Seeing the confused look on his son's face he said in his native tongue, "Wah Kee, you bring shame upon your father! Go now to the son of my friend and hold forth your hand in token of peace."

Wah Kee did as he was bidden. Going close to the white boy, he held out his hand, smiling amicably. The white boy grinned in return and grasped the extended hand. They looked into each other's face and were friends, a friendship that grew and strengthened as time passed.

Newton now always accompanied his father whenever the merchant came to Wong's store. The lads were able to communicate only by signs now, but before six months had passed they could converse without difficulty on all topics that pertained to their interest.

One day Newton came alone into the store; eluding Wong, whom he knew would question him, he sought out Wah Kee and said, "I've come alone, Wah Kee."

"Where you faddah?" asked Wah Kee in surprise.

"He's in his office. I knew the way and I came alone."

"You talka him come?" asked Wah Kee.

"No. I don't ask him everything, I don't have to," answered Newton with a show of pride.

Wah Kee meditated long on this. It was so different with him: naught could he do without the consent of his parent.

"That's what you say him, velly bad," said he at last.

"Why?" asked Newton.

"No speaka faddah, velly bad—what—"

"Now, look here, Wah Kee, you don't understand. You can't do anything without your father knows it, but with me it's different. I expect to do things when I grow up," and Newton swelled out his chest pompously.

"Me, too," said Wah Kee, "but my faddah always talka me how."

"Oh, it's different with you. You're a Chinaman; I'm a white man, and we've got a God and a heaven for the good."

"Me got a God, too."

"What God have you got, Wah Kee?" asked Newton incredulously.

"Me got 'em," answered Wah Kee, complacently.

"Shucks, Wah Kee! You're a heathen, and heathens don't have Gods."

"Who got 'em, just white men?" asked Wah Kee.

"Well—no—our God is everybody's God."

"Then he mine, too," added Wah Kee quickly.

"No, you're a heathen I tell you, and heathens don't have any."

"Say, what you call 'em—heathen?" asked Wah Kee; but Newton could not answer intelligently and the subject was dropped while some congenial sport suggested itself.

Afterward Wah Kee asked his father what was meant by heathen, and Wong laughingly answered that it meant everybody but white people, he guessed. These questions often arose between Wah Kee and Newton as they grew older, the white boy enforcing his arguments with divers comparisons that gradually began to affect Wah Kee.

One day Newton pointed out the church he attended. "There is our house of God. Not much like your Joss houses, eh, Wah Kee?"

"No, that is great!" assented Wah Kee.

"And much greater is our God," said Newton.

"I'll go next Sunday and see. You say everybody is welcome," said Wah Kee.

"Why—of course, everybody is welcome," answered Newton.

When they were about seventeen years of age, Newton, one day, found Kee at his devotions before the little image of Buddha. The derision of the white lad was more than he could withstand.

"Don't be a fool, Wah Kee! The idea of you bowing there before those smoking punks and stinking incense! It is more than I can understand in one of your intelligence! If you wish to become as one of us, cast aside this devil's outfit!"

Wah Kee's faith in his ancestral gods waxed weak under the logic and comparisons of his friend, much to the secret sorrow of Wong. Gradually the little alcove became less frequented, his devotions more and more irregular, till at last he failed to replenish the burnt out

punk sticks and the Holy fire in the censor died out and was not relit. The deep feeling of unrest that filled his soul because of the act left Wah Kee unhappy, and he was thankful Tia Tai had not lived: she would have wept, and Wah Kee knew that his resolve would have been shaken.

As Wong grew old and feeble, Wah Kee took his place at his father's desk. The ways of trade were mastered and the firm of "Wong & Son" prospered slowly in a legitimate way.

The vague longing to be as his friend, the American, still filled Wah Kee. He saw the great contrast daily. Why should he, a man with equal rights, equal intelligence to his friend Newton, shuffle about his office in wide silken trousers and paper-soled sandals? Why should he, with thousands in his own right, sit down every day to that little deal table on which were the eternal rice and minced fish, and the chop-sticks. "Faugh!" it made him sick, the contemplation of it all!

Only for his father's sake did he hold in secret his desires. For him Wah Kee had that deep-set, inviolable love, innate in all Celestials for the parent, and so, despite his yearnings to go out into the world, unfettered by the customs of his people, he was silent. He spoke only to his friend Newton of his ambition to rise and move abreast of the great pulsing world of which he had caught fleeting glimpses, and felt its alluring call.

Influenced by desires and ambitions that were similar, a great brother-like love grew within him for Newton, and he worked with and kept abreast of Newton in all his studies, and his friend said to him:

"Wah Kee, were you to cast aside your sandals and appear as one of us, I would not be ashamed of you in any quarter."

The day came when Wong passed to his fathers, and with much pomp and burning of incense, Wah Kee fulfilled his honored sire's wishes.

But straightway there was a change. The old sign, "Wong & Son," was replaced by one, "Wah Kee, Importer of Rice, Teas, and Silks." Wah Kee ap-

peared in a neat business suit and modern hat, minus the dangling queue. He took his meals at a fashionable *café*, and the manners and customs of the people were daily studied. Often he would pass an hour with his friend Newton in the latter's office.

His winning, modest ways, his keen knowledge, and the genuine tact displayed by Wah Kee made him a favorite with many, and under the tutorship of Newton he soon became known as the Americanised Chinee. And he was rich, so rumor went. Newton's impetuousness won for him the recognition of his mother, whose religious fervor did not abate until she had gained him the attention of her pastor, Mr. Allen. In the years of probation under their guidance Wah Kee was pointed out as an example of the power of redemption.

And so Wah Kee came among them, full of that thrilling, buoyant hope that grew and expanded under the potent caresses of those inspiring laws and precepts that announced a new life, a new way of living. They showed the earth to be full of that knowledge of God in which all could labor together. To be sure he was petted and heralded by all: so keen intellectually, so modest in appearance and withal, so generous. As years passed and he had become as one of them, it was through his generosity, and by his efforts that many a social church affair was piloted to a successful financial conclusion.

Through it all, Wah Kee prospered. The business of several great firms was given him exclusively in their foreign trade. He still lived modestly in the humble chamber that had sheltered him as a child. "Some day," he would say, "I will shake this barnacle that still clings to me."

With Newton, things had not prospered since his father had left him in control of the firm. Wah Kee knew that, for there was a woeful balance on his account with Wah Kee, that had come gradually. It had been the custom of the Perrys for years to settle all balances every six months, and although his regular orders had of late far exceeded any previous year, no settlement was made. Wah Kee

thought that his friend's business was increasing and he was correspondingly happy.

Months passed, and as it neared the holidays, Wah Kee was called upon to fill orders for Newton's house amounting to several thousands of dollars. He sat at his desk, pondering long on some things that appeared to him as unusual. He had not seen Newton of late, and once it appeared to him that he had been avoided. He turned to the ledger showing Newton's account: nearly seven thousand dollars, and the year was closing. He did not fear for the money; it was not that, but it was not business—the elder Perry would not have allowed such a balance.

He left the store without giving the order to the foreman; there would be time on the morrow. Someway, the desire to see Newton grew as he thought of his actions of the last few weeks. He had not seen Newton at church for several months; his mother and sister came alone. They had spoken to him kindly, and when he asked for Newton, they told of some indisposition or again of his being out of the city; but there was a lack of ease and confidence in their answer, he remembered now. If Newton was in trouble he would go to him!

After closing hours he went to his room, and lighting a candle, he sat for some time looking over his papers in the dim light. He still used this ancient mode of light, because, as he told Newton, it was in keeping with the humble surroundings, but in his heart he knew he did so out of respect that he held for his dead parents who had struggled up from poverty. He was proud of them: of the heritage of honor they had left him. He knew his sire was one of the ancient families of the old empire, banished for some political cause, who had made his way to success in this great and free country. Pride for both his parents was deeply rooted in his nature.

As he jotted down entries in his private ledger, he paused from time to time, to gaze from the little portrait of them on the wall to the silken stars and stripes above it: an appreciation of his church's gratitude for a patriotic speech. Ah,

that church of Christ, of a living God! It had lifted him from the darkness of unrest and indecision to a hope, to a future! He glanced across the room to the curtained alcove, but the thought of what was hidden there brought no resentment or terror, as it had sometimes in the past; he had received the blessing of peace!

After a time his thoughts came back to Newton, and he felt a vague sense of regret at the turn of affairs, and wondered if he had done right in not filling the last order promptly. He closed the book and arose, a sudden determination to see Newton urging him. At the moment of doing so he heard the lock of the street door click and the door shut, followed closely by Newton's familiar step. Wah Kee sank back with a sigh of relief.

"Hello, Newton!" he called in a tone that rang with pleasure.

"Hello, Wah Kee!" answered Newton. "Working away like a beaver in its den. I gad! if I had your money, I'd take things in a little more sensible way." Newton's eyes glanced at the ledger, then swept the room swiftly.

"Oh, I'm not doing much," laughed Wah Kee, "I always keep in touch with my accounts, you know."

He noted the sarcasm in Newton's voice as he said slowly, "You must feel worried over my account, fear for it, no doubt."

"I could not fill your order off-hand with—"

"With such a balance staring you in the face," interrupted Newton.

"No, I—" began Wah Kee, but again Newton interrupted at an unhappy moment.

"I thought as much. You fear for a few, paltry thousands," he began.

"Why, Newton! I have never expressed that fear, have I? 'Tis true I have sought an interview with you several times of late, but ceased when I found you avoided me. You wrong me if you construe my actions for evident anxiety in regard to business relations. I sought you," he added slowly, "with no motive but that which springs from a deep feeling of a friendship that has never, until now, been questioned."

There was the faintest touch of sorrow in Wah Kee's voice as he ended. He looked calmly into Newton's face but the forced dignity of the latter weakened, and his eyes shifted uneasily around the room, everywhere but on Wah Kee's face.

As Wah Kee eyed his friend thus closely, he read him plainly. Distress, deep and crushing, showed through that studied pose of calmness.

"Newton," said he, as the other did not answer, "do not worry about that balance, another six months will place you—"

"I am not worrying about that balance," said Newton in a voice that caused Wah Kee's eyes to dilate slightly. "It's money I want, and must have—at once." The protesting dignity of his actions broke in a wild cry that was half appeal, half menace. He paced back and forth before Wah Kee, who watched him in astonishment.

"Look here, Newton! sit down and tell me your trouble. You used to confide in me, how much money do you need?"

Newton stopped before him and gasped, "I want ten thousand dollars—tonight. I must have it at once!"

Wah Kee glanced up at him almost stupefied. "Ten thousand dollars—tonight! Why, Newton—"

"Yes, ten thousand dollars, I tell you!" cried Newton in a frenzy. "You have it—and right in that safe! Now will—will you aid me? You can!"

Wah Kee arose, stupefied with a great fear that seemed to be settling around him. The wild, almost insane actions of Newton, so unnatural to him, unnerved him for the moment.

"Newton—what have you done?" he cried, with a force that caused the man to subside for a moment.

"What have I done? I've forged a note on Vrissel & Co.—and I've got between now and banking hours tomorrow to reclaim it. You've the money! The money, I say! Right in that safe before us. Give it to me, at once, Wah Kee!"

He paused, and his eyes, red with the fever that was raging in him, sought the little safe that stood open before

them. So great was the terror, so insistent his desire, he seemed impelled by some force to move more closely and rest his trembling hands on the little safe that held the means of his salvation. Wah Kee was calm as he spoke.

"You've gambled in those stocks—and lost, Newton. I feared it; but I will aid you."

A fierce light of joy swept Newton's face at the words and Wah Kee continued:

"I cannot do it with that money—the money that is in the safe, but tomorrow at 10 o'clock I will draw for you the amount desired."

As he spoke the glad light died slowly in Newton's eyes.

"Ten o'clock! Good God, man! I tell you I must have it before ten to save myself! What will a few hours difference make to you!" he cried hoarsely.

"In a way, my own honor," answered Wah Kee. "Tomorrow is the last day of the year, and several of my employees have requested that their yearly wages be paid over. I have promised it at opening hours. Most of the money in the safe is their hard-earned wages; they know I have drawn it from the bank to pay them. I have promised—they expect it; that is why I cannot give you that money, Newton. At 10, tomorrow—"

"I tell you I must have it at once! Is this the mode you take of saving a friend? A great and lasting force religion has had upon you! You are the same cold, fanatical heathen you were at birth: God and the devil are all one to you. Bah! that for the Christianity that is in you!" He snapped his fingers as he hissed the words through his clenched teeth, but Wah Kee did not quaver before his frenzied actions. He did not answer for he saw the insane gleam in Newton's eyes and he feared, not for himself but for the frenzied man.

"You have the money here! It is my salvation—I will have it now—at once!" His hands were clenched, his eyes aflame.

Still Wah Kee was silent.

"Will you give it to me, or shall I take it?" he said huskily.

"I cannot give you that money," answered Wah Kee, "it is not mine."

For a moment Newton's strong form seemed to vibrate, either with indecision or passion; then without a word he suddenly grasped Wah Kee and threw him with great force to the floor. It was no task, Wah Kee did not exert himself to retaliate.

"The keys to the inner drawer: where are they?"

Wah Kee did not answer, a great sob of sorrow choked all utterance.

"You lie still—I'll find them," said Newton rising. "I have n't time to bind you, and I don't want to hurt you, but if you interfere, I'll kill you!" Saying this he drew from his coat pocket a revolver and with trembling hands placed it on the corner of the safe beside him.

Wah Kee lay where he had been thrown. He seemed chained by a fear worse than death. A thousand memories of the past floated through his mind. That his friend, his one friend, could turn with one swift act and bury the teachings of Christ on which he had been nourished from an infant, aye from countless ages of ancestry, was more than his stunned and bewildered senses could understand. The gentle mother, the kind friends—oh, the dishonor of it all!

Honor! honor! his soul cried. It was not the loss of the money: gladly would he have given all he had to save him; it was something else: he could not tell, but he felt that something was torn from his soul—his faith! that he could not recover.

"Newton," he called, "Newton, my friend, pause now before it is too late! Wait!"

Newton did not answer and only his heavy breathing told of the strain under which he labored. A few seconds and he arose from the safe, holding in his hands the roll of bills for which he had sought.

"I've got the money, and I'm going. Don't talk to me of church, or anything else, now—have no fear, I'll return this soon." He stuffed the bills hurriedly into his pocket and reached for the revolver. In his nervousness or haste he knocked it from the safe. As it struck the floor, there was a flash, a sharp report, and Newton staggered back, pressing a hand to his shoulder; then he turned

and with a smothered cry, dashed down the stairway. Wah Kee arose, picked up the revolver and followed hastily.

How it was, Wah Kee never knew, but Newton, either from pain or fright failed to open the street door until just as Wah Kee came stumbling heavily down. Both fell, far out upon the walk. They arose, and as Newton turned to flee, Wah Kee called pleadingly, "Stop, for God's sake, Newton!"

In a second a crowd hedged them in, an officer appeared. "He shot me," cried Newton.

There stood Wah Kee still holding the revolver, before him his bleeding victim: it was all plain. In a stupor, Wah Kee suffered himself to be led away, followed by the menacing words and gestures of an angry crowd.

In the few hours that Wah Kee sat in the darkness of the cell, some potent force had been busy.

At daybreak, the turnkey accompanied by the chief appeared.

"There has been some mistake," said the latter, "it was plainly an accident. No one has been seriously injured—there is no charge against you—no one will appear. It is regrettable. You are free to go."

Wah Kee did not answer, but went out into the street and hastily sought his room.

Here also, was manifest the effects of the same subtle power that had freed him. The room was in order, the safe was closed; nothing to show a tragedy had occurred. He sat down and bowed his head, trying to regain his scattered faculties. It seemed a dream—the whole night's happenings!

He arose and went to the safe, throwing wide its doors. Everything was in place, only the money was missing. Newton had taken it, it was no dream!

He blamed himself that he had not given it to him at once, but he had not realized the terror inspired by the man's position—frenzied by the overhanging disgrace! But for that one expression, "he shot me," Wah Kee would have been at peace. He must see Newton at once. The chief had said, "No one was

seriously injured," but he must see him.

A few moments later and he stood in the parlor of the Perry home. The servants eyed him curiously, and spoke in monosyllables. A strange fear settled on Wah Kee's heart, and when Mrs. Perry entered, her face told all.

"Oh, Wah Kee! how could you? How could you? After all I have done to aid you to a Christian life!" She sobbed and drew back from him as from a pestilence.

"Mrs. Perry, there is some mistake. I—" his voice choked, his blood chilled at the look of abhorrence she gave him.

"Don't lie, Wah Kee. Newton has told me all," she went on hastily. "How he failed to pay as promptly as you desired; how you became enraged at the interview, and shot him. Oh, how could you! I thought, we all thought, you had been won from the ways in which you were born!"

Her voice was a mixture of sorrow and fear. Wah looked at her calmly, not a line of his face betraying the deep emotion he felt, only the hand that grasped the chair before him trembled.

"Mrs. Perry, did Newton—tell you—that?" His voice sounded low and far away to his ringing ears.

"Yes—yes. That and more. How, after your attempt—oh, God forgive you, Wah Kee—he caused by his influence, to have you freed, and the report made public—that it was an accident. He did that, Wah Kee, from the fullness of his Christian heart."

"Mrs. Perry, will you call Newton, and let me speak to him in your presence?" There was a deep note of appeal in his voice.

"No—no—I cannot—it would be useless. Newton anticipated your visit. Have no fear; it is his wish that the matter drop; he will not prosecute you." She spoke rapidly, as if she would dismiss him and the subject forever.

"Will you not listen, and believe me," he began, but the look on her face caused him to pause abruptly. He gazed at her a moment in silence—the woman that had aided him through long years of righteous endeavor—then, without further

words, he bowed, and slowly left the house.

Numb and bewildered, he aimlessly walked to the bank, drew what money he needed to pay his men and returned to the store. After a full settlement with all, he closed the store with explanations to none, and sought his room.

He saw it all now, too plainly. To save himself, Newton had sacrificed him. And who would believe him? Well, he knew his word would be of no avail against Newton's. It was not the loss of the money that he thought of: something else, for which he had given almost a lifetime's effort, was slipping from him; something which he knew he could not recall. One last effort he would make. He would see the good Mr. Allen. There was an ear that would listen in kindness to all, and judge each kindly. With this hope buoying him, he sought the house of Mr. Allen.

No preliminaries were needed, for Mr. Allen's face told Wah Kee that the news had preceded him.

"Wah Kee," said Mr. Allen, "it grieves me deeply—ah, more than words can express, to hear of the great sin that has fallen at your door."

Wah Kee's eyes flashed for a second then a look of unutterable despair settled on his face.

"You have heard but one side of this affair, Mr. Allen. Listen, for God's sake, and believe the truth." With voice calm, and in tones that pleaded for recognition, he told of the night's happenings. Through it all, Mr. Allen did not once allow his eyes to meet those of Wah Kee. He listened as a father would to the excuses of a wayward son, his thin lips drawing tight over his teeth and a look of incredulity coming into his eyes as Wah Kee told of Newton fleeing with the money.

Nothing escaped Wah Kee's despairing gaze. He felt that hope on which he had staked all, steadily and slowly forsaking him, but he kept on until he had told all, calmly and truthfully. When he had finished, Mr. Allen arose and faced him, not one sentence of Wah Kee's tale had he believed.

"Wah Kee," said he, and his voice rang with pitying sorrow, "Wah Kee, you must

pray: pray for strength, pray for the grace of God. I will not give you up yet. Go now, and I will see you again when you are calmer." He bowed to Wah Kee who turned, broken in hope and spirit, out into the night.

What was it at which he had grasped: that indefinable something he had thought secure within him, that power in which he had felt so secure! He did not know he had erected an idol: one to be shattered by the same power that brought it forth! He could not realize that immortal man could be filled with mortal sin; that sin could abide with immortal belief. He felt that he had walked as one among them but not of them; he had in some way staked all on the actions of Mr. Allen, the result of which had been as the severing of life's bonds! It had all come so suddenly, and left him walking in darkness, but the calmness of a great decision soon settled upon him.

In and out through the cross streets he threaded his way, hoping to be unobserved. He passed several of his countrymen as he neared his home, who on recognizing him, threw up their hands in dismay or grunted audibly in contempt. "Wah Kee, the renegade," they as much as shouted, but Wah Kee cared as little now for their jibes as when he was filled with that wonderful hope, that power of expectation. They were as nothing to him, and he gave no sign that betokened a knowledge of their presence. He shambled on, spiritless, heart-sick, God-forsaken—yes, that was it—God-forsaken. He had heard the word in English and it was befitting he should use it in reference to himself, for truly, he felt without a God! The God of the white man had not succored him; the God of his own people had deserted him!

Mechanically he made his way up the stair and into his chamber. By the light of a candle he surveyed the room critically, going from wall to wall, examining, caressing, giving, as it were, a greeting to every familiar object. For a long time he paused before the picture of his father that hung beneath the flag; then as if moved by some subtle influence, he turned and drew aside the curtains of

the long disused niche that contained the ancestral God.

Like the tinkling of bells in a dream, came the words of Newton: "I tell you, Wah Kee, you are a heathen, and heathens don't have a God;" and again, "Our God is a God for all."

There was something about it that was beyond his power to grasp, and now for the first time in years he raised his eyes and viewed the alcove containing the god of his people. The light falling across the brazen features of the image caused it to give forth little sinister flashes, as if it smiled a sarcastic greeting at the return of the wanderer.

Wah Kee set about his task mechanically, but with a decision that was conclusive. The heavy dust and mold of years was brushed aside, a richly embroidered rug was placed before the image; fresh punk sticks were brought forth and ignited; the oil in the censor was replenished and relit, and when all was as it had been in the years long gone, Wah Kee arrayed himself

in the silken garments of his sire.

Taking a small vial from a drawer, he squatted before the God of his people. There was no hesitation, no faltering. He bowed his head and began the low chant of the dead in his native tongue. Back and forth his body swayed in harmony with the weird chant. The smoke from the burning punk arose slowly on the close air and hung in fantastic streamers about the room.

Gradually the swaying body stilled, the chant died into silence, a hand holding the tiny vial came from the folds of the silken blouse—a quick motion and the raised head bowed again.

He had sought an alluring phantom and found disappointment. True, he had found that strange mixture of sorrow and happiness, but why accept that when peace and oblivion might be obtained!

Through the smoke-wraiths that hung over all, the face of the brazen god beamed with a malignant, boastful smile. He had won back his own.

## A Knight of the Hop Fields

BY KATE W. HAMILTON

"I don't want it to be mornin' yet!" protested a querulous voice somewhere back in the dark recesses of the shack.

A sinewy brown hand pushed aside the frayed and dingy curtain of burlap that served as a door, a gray head emerged from the opening, and in a moment Old Hester stood without, surveying as much of the world as she might in the dim, uncertain light which precedes the dawn. The dew lay heavy at her feet; a fluttering breeze brought the pungent odor of the hop-fields. Over head the stars were still shining, but the morning-star was gloriously foretelling the day, and along the eastern horizon lay a band of pale gray. The old woman noted it all before she returned her philosophic reply to the complaining voice within.

"What we want an' what we git most gener'ly ain't a match team. Anyway 'tis mornin'."

Small Jo yielded to the inevitable, and made her limited toilet to an accompaniment of indistinct mutterings. She could not postpone the coming of the day, but she could at least have the satisfaction of grumbling. Trudy, near at hand, was moving swiftly and silently about in the gloom making her brief preparations for the day's toil. She seldom questioned her grandmother's opinions in regard to anything, and was accustomed to having her decisions ready-made. Presently gleams of ruddy light, with occasional whiffs of smoke, began to penetrate the many crevices of the queer little abode—half hut, half tent—and by the time the girls passed out Old Hester was engaged in cooking the breakfast. The culinary arrangements were simple enough; an open fire with a kettle hanging over it, and at one side a few bricks enclosing some smouldering coals, over which sizzled a pan of bacon;

but there was nothing commonplace in the appearance of the one who presided over them. The red glare illuminated a figure nearly six feet in height, arrayed in an odd combination of masculine and feminine attire. The short calico skirt revealed a pair of heavy boots, and the outer garment which protected her from the chill of the September morning was a well-worn frieze coat. The straggling gray locks under the broad-brimmed hat, and the bronze face with its countless seams and lines, told a story of toilful years, but there was no sign of age in the erect form or in the keen eyes flashing out from under the shaggy white brows. Old Hester was still a power in the hop-fields, and few pickers could hope to equal the skill and swiftness of her claw-like fingers.

Other fires began to spring up here and there as if this first one had been a beacon that called for answering signals, and when the sun peeped above the hill-tops it was upon a bustling settlement suddenly springing into life from rude tents, curiously constructed cabins of boughs and boards, or low huts of the ever-ready hop-vines. Smoke, the steam of boiling kettles and the odors of hurriedly prepared breakfasts mingled in the air, while human beings of all sexes and ages seemed to have been evoked from the silent earth as if by magic.

"There goes Old Hester and her satellites," commented one of a group of belated breakfasters. "Start when ye like that old squaw's ahead, and she's sharp enough to git the best pickin'."

One of the satellites, ten year old Jo, turned with a scowl at the remark. Jo and life were often at odds, and she had not yet forgiven the sun for his absurd hour of rising. If Trudy heard she gave no heed. Her small world held so many pleasant things that it was scarcely worth while to notice the few of any other kind which crept into it. The September morning was fair to see as the rosy east gave way to a flood of golden light; late birds were holding jubilee above the great field with its seemingly interminable aisles of green, walled by swaying vines and rustling blossoms. The work was not hard, the pay was good, hop-picking-time was one of life's enjoyable pages—why should not

Trudy follow her grandmother well content? The girl's pink sun-bonnet was drawn in proper protectiveness about her face; she did not notice the round, sunburned, good-natured countenance, framed in a shock of blonde hair and beard, which was cautiously uplifted above a neighboring row of vines to watch her pass. Jo, loitering sulkily a few yards behind, turned upon it her elfish face and sharp black eyes.

"Well, full moon, what are ye comin' up at this time o' day for?" she demanded crossly.

No one beholding the apparition could question the accuracy of her description. The man grinned sheepishly, deprecatingly, and held up a paper bag.

"Got somethin' for ye," he whispered hoarsely.

Jo clasped her hands behind her, and faced him; she scented a bribe, and did not propose to be bought without fully understanding the terms of the barter.

"What ye want?" she asked.

"Nothin', Jo, nothin'." Her question evidently confused the offerer of gifts. "It's candy what I bought for ye. No, I don't want nothin' on'y—on y—Say, Jo, if ye jist would n't say things, ye know, when ye see me kinder—kinder hangin' 'round."

"Then I would n't talk at all, 'cause ye're always hangin' 'round," retorted the child, but she reached for the paper sack and deposited it in the folds of her faded scarlet blouse. "An' ye'd better stop watchin' folks so much, Bart Sickles, an' do more pickin' if ye're ever goin' to earn money 'nough to go a-preachin'," she added severely.

"Jos'phine," called Old Hester from somewhere in advance.

When Granny took time to call one's full name it was always safe to move, and the young feet trudged reluctantly forward. Jo had made no promises, but Bart dropped down behind his sheltering vines well satisfied with the purchase that had cost him a three-mile tramp into town the previous evening.

"Ain't she the cutest little pickle! Purty pink sun-bonnet a-bobbin' along that delikit an' quiet-like, an' she a seein' nothin'. Oh lawsy!" he murmured rapturously. Jo did not wear a sun-bonnet; she was only

related to one, but he felt the need of propitiation.

The field was alive with workers before an hour had passed, and vines lying prone on the ground marked the advance of the toiling army. Green masses standing bravely erect and waving their fragrant banners one minute, were torn from their support the next, and stripped of all their summer's store. Skillful fingers speedily gathered the light blossoms into baskets, which in turn were emptied into bags to await the marking of the weigher and the passage of the great wagons which bore them to the kilns. It was a busy scene, and the countless atoms of humanity moving amid the foliage looked as if they had been blown together by the caprice of the four winds. Old men and little children; whole families eager by their combined earnings to lift a mortgage from the humble home, or buy a monument for one of their departed; nomads in need of funds to pursue their wanderings; girls desirous of finery for the winter frolics; penniless men with

schemes for which they must "make a stake;" anxious women with helpless ones dependent upon them; bright-faced boys earning money enough to carry them through the next school-term; ne'er-do-wells forced by cruel circumstances to work occasionally—they were all there for the few weeks of the hop harvest, with their varying stories written on their faces. Among the many who came for a single season and were seen no more were some "regulars"—those who returned year after year—and these had the skilled experience

both in arranging their quarters and making their employment yield its utmost profits. Old Hester was of this number, and was easily queen of the pickers, however the envious might complain of her methods and hint that her achievements were impossible.

"It seems to be what the scales say that settles these matters," ventured one impartial listener to some of these inuendoes. But he was only a college student trying to earn a little extra money—"one of them softy chaps what has to have his langwidge all b'iled afore he uses it," an aggrieved hearer of the remark reported at a camp-fire that evening.

What the scales said was all that Old Hester concerned herself with, and while she was dexterously forcing them to a good account each day she was keen-eyed in holding her granddaughters to like ways of industry. If her dark skin was not wholly due to years of exposure, but spoke of a dash of Indian blood, as some of the camp gossips hinted, it was certain that its softened tint was far



DRAWN BY J. H. NORTON

Old Hester was cooking breakfast.

from unattractive in the younger faces of the girls. Jo, indeed, was scarcely more than an interrogation point as yet; a prickly burr holding unguessed possibilities of future development; but the creamy brown of Trudy's rounded cheek, the scarlet of her lips, and the light in her shyly-lifted dark eyes, lured many a wandering gaze.

"Would n't it be the sort to shine on ye though, t'other side of a fire-place of an evenin'—doors all shet, 'an' wind kinder blowin' 'round the chimbly?" mused Bart

Sickles, his clumsy fingers fumbling among the vines, but his thoughts busy with the vision framed by the pink sun-bonnet. Trudy's face was sorely interfering with Bart's picking receipts in these days, but no amount of financial gain could have afforded the delight of the dreams in which his soul was reveling. He had scarcely realized until this season in the hop-fields how lonely his little cabin had grown since the thrifty mother, who always managed it and him, had taken her way to the unknown. He had plodded on in the old fashion, doing his luckless best with the empty rooms and the solitary meals. He had even made vague efforts, as he once rashly confided to Jo, in one of that young lady's gracious intervals, toward carrying out the maternal ambition that he "might be a preacher some day."

"'Pears like I can't never go back an' stand it that way no more," he muttered, crowding memories down in his heart with more vigor than he crowded the blossoms into his slowly-filling basket. "Land o' Belshazzar! Would n't she take keer o' that ol' chist o' drawers like maw did, an' the chickens, an' every blame thing? Seems like I can jes' see her a foolin' round there, purty as a pictur, an' makin' everything look nice an' womanly. 'D' ye want any wood or water?' says I to her. 'Yes, dear,' says she—think o' her sayin' that to me—'dear!'"

Bart's kick of ecstasy nearly overturned his basket, and with the prosaic necessity for righting it the vision fled, and his mood grew so nber.

"Ye're a plumb idjit, Bart Sickles, that's what! She won't never say that to ye, nor nothin' else, 'cause why ye won't never say nothin' to her—ye don't dast! Ef ye ever got a chance ye would n't dast. It'd be jes' like that time ye planned out an exhort, an' went out to the timber to preach it. The minute the trees begins to rustle, ye consated ye could see eyes wakin' out 'n every one of 'em, an' ye was that skeered ye could n't recolick a blame word. Lawsy, what a fool!

"Other fellers can talk to her fast enough; they're tongues don't git par'lyzed, an' they can sense things to do, like that Frenchy chap what's slidin' handfuls of hops into her basket on the sly. Seen him

at that two or three times this mornin'?" Bart scowled. "She don't need none o' his help; she can pick 'nough sight faster 'n he can, an' she don't like him noways."

The skulking figure was going on its errand once more, and from behind his leafy screen Bart watched with smouldering jealousy. Suddenly his dejection gave way to a flash of rage. He cleared the intervening barrier with a bound, and catching the stooping form by the collar, lifted and shook it as a dog might a rat.

"So that's what ye was doin', ye thievin' sneak? Puttin' leaves an' sticks in the basket so 'twould git throwed out at the weighin', was ye? Ye can bet I'll teach ye better 'n that ef it cracks every bone in yer 'natomy to larn it!" he roared.

The captive could only choke, struggle, and beat the air helplessly; he was powerless in the grasp of the blonde giant who towered above him so wrathfully. Old Hester and her granddaughters, startled and amazed, looked on uncomprehendingly, until Bart's arraignment and the abject terror of his prisoner made themselves clear.

"I—I was n't! Only for a joke," gasped the latter, as soon as his feet were allowed to touch the ground, and the hand on his collar relaxed sufficiently for him to speak. "I—it was n't nothin' but a joke," he whined.

"Well, 'twould 'a' been mighty amusin' ef nobody had ketched ye at it," agreed Bart with another vigorous shake. "Don't wonder ye're so tickled ye trimble all over. Ye're goin' to have all the fun to yerself, too, hear me? Ye're goin' to bring your full basket of hops right over here, an' empty it into this one, an' then ye're goin' to take this lot with the nice little jokes in it yerself, an' kite off to some other part o' the field where ye won't show yer nose 'round here no more. Land o' Belshazzar, but it'll be funny!"

The culprit, thankful to escape so easily, made no attempt to evade the terms offered him; with trembling hands and a haste born of terror he made the transfer.

Old Hester's face was a study. There was a red fire in her eyes, an ireful drawing erect of her frame that proclaimed her well able to protect herself and avenge her wrongs; but this act of treachery would

have been undiscovered but for Bart's interference. She knew well what such a plot, successfully carried out, would have meant—any one on the field would know. In order that pickers, once engaged, might not be free to desert the harvesting at will, only promissory notes were issued for forenoon work, payable at the end of the season. The check-slips for the afternoon picking were readily convertible into cash for present needs, but those of the morning were held, and any one who abandoned the work, or who through carelessness or attempt to add to the weight, mixed dirt or leaves with the hops, forfeited all his accumulated notes, though they might represent half the earnings of an entire season.

The old woman's gaze slowly turned from the figure slinking out of view down the green vista to the stalwart specimen of mankind beside her, and there was a new curiously mingled with something of respect in the look with which she surveyed him. The swift transformation of the slow, good-natured, awkward fellow into such an avenging fury, awakened a speculative interest. She was not one to lose sight of her main purpose, however, for any incidental happening; the danger was passed, and with half her day's work before her she had no mind for dallying over the occurrence. If she suspected that Bart was more than willing to linger a little and talk it over, she shrewdly forestalled any such proceeding.

"'Pears like 'twas a mighty friendly act ye done, but 'twas a shame ye must be hindered in yer work," she said. "Mebby ye could come over of an evenin' an' tell us of the rights of it; but 'twould be poor thanks to waste more basketfuls than ye saved, so we won't stop ye no longer."

It was diplomatically done, but Trudy caught at the words and deftly wove them into a slightly different shape.

"I'm surely 'bliged to ye, Bart," said the sweet voice, hesitating timidly. "Do come over this evenin', like Granny says, an' tell us all how it happened."

Bart could only nod his enraptured acceptance, and hug himself as if a sudden cramp had rendered him speechless. Granny's dismissal was not even remembered when that invitation flung wide the golden gates of Paradise.

"Huh! there is a man in the moon after all! I never b'lieved there was," commented Jo for her own edification when she was forced to resume her task. "Mebby he might preach—leastways ef he could hold his congregation by their collars an' shake 'em whilst he did it. Wish it had been my basket that Frenchy was meddlin' with; then I'd 'a' got a brim-full one in place of it, an' this 'n ain't more 'n half full yet."

The prostrate vines were like air beneath Bart's feet as he returned to his place. He could have embraced Frenchy as a benefactor, and gratefully have bestowed upon him his last dollar, if that worthy had again appeared.

"To think o' him doin' me sech a blame good turn as that out o' plumb meanness! There's sure good luck for children an' fools, an' Bart Sickles is one of 'em," he admitted cheerfully, without stopping to specify to which class he belonged. "Sech a whalin' opperchunity!"

But opportunity's open gate and the ability to enter it are not always coincident. When evening fell, and the green avenues and trampled vines were deserted for the re-kindled camp-fires, Bart, arraying himself in the best his tent afforded, felt strange chills and tremors invading his courage. The yellow harvest moon rolled up to supplant the dying daylight, the fires flung strange lights and shadows far afield. From distant huts and wigwams came faint, sweet notes of flute or mandolin as some lonely camper solaced his solitude. Groups of pickers, who had doffed the garb of the field and made themselves fine, strolled toward in search of an evening's recreation. Now and then a chorus arose from far-away voices in plaintive negro melody or camp-meeting songs, while over all the gathering 'dew was awakening the heavy, soporific odor of the hops.

Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone,  
Dare to have a purpose true,  
Dare to make it known.

counseled a distant singer with earnest insistence as Bart, for the third time, circled helplessly about the rude little shack without venturing to approach the door.

"Oh, lawsy! ef I on'y dast!" he groaned,



DRAWN BY J. N. NORTON

"'Pears like 'twas a mighty friendly act you done.'"

stung to exasperation by his unknown adviser.

"Was ye a lookin' for anything, Mr. Sickles?" inquired a soft voice from the shadow beside the door.

Any one but Bart would have understood that Trudy was herself looking for something—or some one—very eagerly, but he considered those words as a most wonderful and merciful interposition of the powers in his behalf. He plunged toward the voice.

"Yes I—Do you live here, Trudy?—I kinder was a lookin'—but 'tain't no matter."

"Will ye set?" she asked, indicating a place beside her on the wash-bench, by the log wall, which served as the family piazza.

Bart sat. He searched his brain for some of the conversational topics he had proposed to himself during the day: topics that should gradually and not too startlingly lead up to the one momentous subject; but they had all vanished. Trudy introduced the episode of the morning, but it had really been brief, painfully brief it appeared now, and though she reiterated her gratitude the matter was soon exhausted, and Bart fell back upon the remark that had been serving as a refrain for the last half hour:

"It's a mighty purty evenin'."

It certainly was. Granny and Jo had already retired, and Trudy and he had it all to themselves. Again the distant singer quavered out an urgent exhortation:

Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to make it known.

and Bart made a desperate effort.

"Seems like I've been a lonesome man sence maw died. I've got a snug cabin six or seven miles back, but it don't noways seem like the same place sence she ain't there no more—the chist o' drawers, nor chickens, nor nothin'. She an' me 'd al'ays lived together, an' she kep' things so kinder chirked up an' nice that a feller could n't help but feel an in'trust in 'em. When she got sick I did my best to take keer o' her—I 'low I did my very best," he said simply, with a memory of the long days when he had been nurse, house-keeper, and comforter in the little home where all his strength and care could not avail to bar out the dark intruder. "Sence

she was took I've tried to keep up things the way she wanted 'em, too, dustin' the chist o' drawers an' everything—they're a pow'rful nice chist o' drawers—an' keepin' up the posy-bed like she use to have it. I've had a posy to take out where she's layin' every Sunday."

"That's real nice of you, Bart," said the girl sympathetically, and a slender brown hand made an impulsive movement toward the big ones whose fingers were interlocking nervously. The shy advance was unnoticed, and the hand fluttered back to its place.

"But it's been lonesome," pursued Bart, "an' lately I've been a thinkin'—leastways I've been a thinkin'."

"Twould 'a' been awful lonesome fer Jo an' me when our folks was took, ef it had n't been fer Granny," observed Trudy with a view of preventing his thoughts from absorbing him altogether.

"That's it, ye had some one. 'Tain't noways good fer a man to be alone. Now ef I had some one like—like—a grandmother!" The last word was uttered explosively, and Bart wiped his perspiring forehead with a new handkerchief of blue cotton which left it strangely streaked.

"She surely do be a great blessin'," agreed Trudy reflectively.

"Ef ye—Oh, Trudy, seems like I'm a hankerin' fer yer—yer—grandmother!" gasped Bart, unable to let go the word that appeared to be the sole supporting spar in the wide sea in which he was floundering. "Ef—jest s'posin' ef—you 'n me was to have one grandmother!"

Old Hester's head reposed near the curtain door, and her rest was being sorely disturbed. Her patience was exhausted, and she pulled aside a corner of the burlap and looked out.

"Ef so be ye've come a-courtin', Bart Sickles, do fer the land's sake say it out an' have done with it! "Twill be time to begin pickin' ag'in 'fore ye git anywheres."

Bart sprang out into the moonlight with a muffled whoop of joy.

"That's it, Trudy! that's it!" he whispered excitedly. "I'm here a-courtin'; she said it! Ever have a tooth that 'd oughter come out when ye was a kid, an' git a string hitched to it an' be afeared to pull? Was n't ye glad when somebody ketched



DRAWN BY J. N. NORTON

Bart arrayed himself in the best the tent afforded.

holt unexpectedly an' yanked it out? That's what yer Granny done—yanked the truth right out'n my mouth. That's what 'tis, Trudy, I'm courtin' ye fer certain. Land o' Belshazzer, but I'm glad it's out!"

In the gloom of the hut Jo's black eyes flashed wide out of sleep at her grandmother's words.

"Is that what he's hangin' 'round fer?" she questioned wonderingly.

"Shet yer lips tight on things ye've no call to talk about," replied Old Hester sententiously.

But Jo was enlightened. She flounced over to the other side of her couch of straw, muttering what might have been a benediction:

"Thank goo'ness he's big enough! I won't have to tote all the water an' kin'lin's the rest o' my days."

Outside the voices sank into a murmur that died on the still air as the speakers strolled away through the moonlit night. Hop-fields or Eden, what does it matter when there are only two in all the world?

The story is ever and always the same.

The foaming beer in the costly stein, the light loaves that grace the table, the pillow placed beneath the sufferer's head in the hope of wooing sleep—these tell no tales of the land from which they come; of the busy fingers that pluck the blossoms through the sweet September days, the camp-fires that shine like huge glow-worms amid the green at night, or the countless human hopes and fears that are packed away in the fragrant bales.

On the last day of the picking there was a rumor, no one quite knew how it started, that the close of the season was to be marked by something a trifle out of the ordinary; and so when tents and huts had been pulled down, there was lingering instead of the usual haste, and a goodly company gathered about the spot where Bart and Trudy were standing. It was an odd wedding assembly. Some were in wagons, some mounted on horses or mules, women stood with babies in their arms, men with bundles strapped to their backs. The

kilns sent up their blue columns of smoke, but the office force had deserted to watch the scene in the fields. One of the pickers—a wandering theologue, who was in orders and also in poverty, had been discovered to be fully qualified to perform the momentous ceremony, and though Mendelssohn's wedding march was missing, a thoughtful spectator proposed that "the crowd sing 'Hail Columby,'" and it was done with a will.

There were congratulations in the shape of three ringing cheers, and then a hasty climbing to the top of the wagon that bore the combined movables of the two contracting parties. Old Hester, indeed, was already there, impatiently holding the

reins, and Jo also had considered the high seat a point of vantage. Bart stood upon the load and looked back at his fellow-workers, his face more like a full moon than ever, and beaming resplendently. He felt in his heart that a speech was due, and he longed to make it, but all the frantic waving of his arms would not bring a flow of words.

"My friends, seems like we've had a blessed—I mean prosp'rous season, an' I'm a hopin'—hopin'—"

It was in vain. Granny touched the horses, the team started down the road and the dismantled fields were left to silence and solitude for another year.

## The Electrobat and *Mon Père*

BY GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

*Mon père*, you know, *mon père* he use' to have de rheumatism somet'ing terrible, so hees legs been all draw up in some knots. All bunch up, yes, sir. It come onto him seven year ago, just w'en he's get ready for go on de drive at Rivière du Loup; for five year he's been *pas capab'* do a stroke. It ain't nevaire show on de outside, someway; *mon père* he say it all been in de nerve, or maybe de joint-water she run out of his joints, so his legs don't bend lak she ought. Funny how it act! Sometam he sit up in bed an' read *La Patrie* an' eat orange; sometam he walk out in de gardin, smokin' his pipe; sometam he say to *ma mère*:

"Emerance," say he, "perhaps I get well; perhaps I go to work nex' week, hein?"

"*Le Bon Dieu* grant it, Narcisse!" answer she. "If only you go work again, all de hard time lift up off de *jamille*, an' Clément (dat's me!) maybe go to school again!"

Den she go tell over her beads an' hask Saint Joseph pray for us; an' sometam she cry so de beads get all wet where some tears dey fall down.

Funny t'ing, dough, after such a talk *mon père* he's always get worse, *toujours*, so dat he lay an' groan an' sometam swear

pretty hard. I remember one spring, when Etienne Beliveau come talk wit' him 'bout raftin' logs down to Cap Santé, *mon père* he's been so bad nex' day he's have to have de Docteur Coderre. *Mon père* he hang to the bed-post an' de *docteur* he get hold by de feet an' pull, pull lak *diable*, so *mon père* he holler lak two cat when she ain't agree wit' each one 'nother. Say, his lung she been more strong lak any lung I evaire hear! W'en de *docteur* let go, de legs snap back same as some rubber band; it ain't done no good. Oh, we had some fearful doin's, an' *mon père* he have to suf faire five year an' not do no work at all.

I tell you, it make us feel pretty bad for hear him groan w'en he's lie propped up an' read *La Patrie*, or hear him cuss wit' de pain, between two bite in his orange. Eat? Oh yes, he's eat all right; he's have good appetite, firs'-rate, all de tam he's been sick. Nothin' de matter wit' him, I tolle you, excep' de legs.

Med'cine? *Ouay, mossieur*, we try 'bout one melleeon kind, an' all de best *docteur* up an' down de Rivière. Dey give him more dan two melleeon pill, yes, sir. Root an' 'arbs he's take, too, one winter fifteen quart, an' he's have a gallon rattlesnake oil rub in his legs, beside. It make 'em for shine lak you been



DRAWN BY W. J. ENRIGHT

"Not one word, madam; not one *sacré syllab!*"

put varneesh on, but de rheumatism she ain't go way. Den one tam he read how w'isky been sure cure, or if you *pas capab'* get w'isky, gin's next best. An' he send me down to Beaulieu's for get one *bouteille* each kind.

W'en *ma mère* she smell his breath pretty soon she say,

"Narcisse! Ain't you shame? Don't you know we been poor an' *pas capab'* waste money? Don't you know it's wrong anyway, w'isky?"

"*Mon Di!*" he answer, "aint sick man got no right for take some med'cine for get well an' go work on Rivière du Loup?"

"Med'cine?"

"*Ben ouay, med'cine!*"

"Where you hear dat, hein?"

"Iain't hear it; I read it! On *La Patrie!*"

"*Vrai?*"

"*Certainement!* You t'ink I go for tell some lie, eh?"

"Show me dat place where it say w'isky she's been med'cine!"

"*Sacré!* How will I can show it? Dat was las' week paper an' she's all burn up now. Ba gollee, I *pas capab'* save nothing in dis house!"

"Narcisse!"

"Dat's de true! Now, now, you might just so well call me liar as look lak dat—oh I see you don't believe it! But I goin' for take dat med'cine reg'lar, anyhow, dough it make me sick just to smell of—just de smell of de cork give me *mal au cœur*. But I do my duty, *ouay, madame*, in spite all you try for stop me, so I get well an' go by my work on de drive nex' spring! Oh, if only you knowed w'at kinds pains I got, me! But you ain't care—so I goin' for doctor de rheumatism myself—"

"Narcisse!"

"De best w'at I can; an' you ain't need say no more—not one word, *madame*—not one *sacré syllab!* . . ."

Den *mon père* wave his fist, an' *ma mère* she cry, an' *mon père* he drink up de two quart in one day, sing in de bed an' tip de table an' make *la grande commune*; but he ain't get well, no sir! An' all dat winter he suffaire somet'ing terreeble, his legs all drawed up in de bed; an' every day he told us jus' how de pains seem for tear de life out of him so he's 'fraid he ain't nevaire goin' be *capab'* work again!

Now, 'long at de end of *Février*, one Hamerican *docteur* he's come to Saint-

Pierre-les-Becquets, an' stop on De Sallier's 'otel down where de Québec boat she mak landing. Dis *docteur*'s name been Holt: he's one *helectricité docteur*, w'at cure every t'ing wit' some wires an' belts an' a masheen he's call his helectrobat. De masheen t'row a courant like de helectric light an' *chasse* out de *maladie* an' make you well lak new. Five *piast'*, it cost, for get de cure; an' if you ain't get it after you go you ain't have for pay one cen', *ouay, mossieur*.

W'en *ma mère* she's hear w'at de Hamerican do, pretty soon she ain't nevaire give de old man no peace any more.

"W'at for you no try dat treatment, Narcisse?" she say. "I hear Madame Labrie she ain't been so well in t'ree year lak she been now, after de cure; an' Gregoire Arseneault got his paralyze arm almost all right again—Joseph Beaucage, too, an' young Croteau an' lots odders get de cure, an' go to work. W'at for you ain't try it, an' get well, an' go to work *aussi*?"

"No, no!" say *mon père*, groanin', "my rheumatism been chronical—she ain't been for get cured by no wire and masheen, I know!"

"Maybe so; but w'at for you ain't try, anyway?"

"What? You want for kill me, hein? Dat *helectricité* she's a most *dangereuse* t'ing! You know, I ain't nevaire even ride on de street-car dat time we been in Québec; it's all de work of *le diable*, every mite! It's de sudden death! I just read on *La Patrie* how one man in Kingston he touch some living wire an' fall down dead; I read how some murderer he been execute by dis same *helectricité*—t'ink of dat! You want me take treatment same like I been one murderer? Now I ask, ain't you shame, Emerance?"

"Listen, Narcisse, listen! Dis ain't de deadly kind—dis been de kind w'at cure, w'at make well!"

"No, no, you can't make me for believe dat, *madame*! De *helectricité* she's always been de *helectricité*, always; she ain't been one kind *aujourd'zhuian'* some odder kind *demain*! Ah ha, *madame*, I know! You want for make me dead so you get my one hundred an' feefty dollar assurance, hein? No, *madame*, you *pas capab'* do it! I may be sufferin' poor Frenchmans, but ba gollee I got good lung an' good hap-

petite an' I ain't goin' for die yet, me!"

"Oh, Narcisse!" say *ma mère*, an' den she cry, an' de old man he say some pretty bad word an' t'row his orange all 'round de room an' holler how his *jamille* goin' for kill him for de hundred an' feefty *piast'*, an' how he's one poor *invalid* an' can't help himself. He say he wish he had good leg so he's able walk away from such peoples an' nevaire see dem again. An' he say a lot more, too—we have *sacré* livelee time on our house dat day, now I *tole* you! . . .

Say, *ma mère* she's got grand persistence, dat's de true. More dan one month she's pester *mon père* every day. "Ain't you goin' try it? Ain't you goin' take de cure?" More dan one month; mebbe hundred time a day, so de old man ain't take no rest nor peace nor nothing. Grand persistence, *ouay, mossieur*.

"*Mon Di Seigneur!*" he holler one morning. "I geeve in! I geeve in! Run quick get dat Hamerican *docteur* an' all his *sacré* masheen an' devil-works! I rather be kill right off, me, as listen all de time dis *sacré* *bavardel'* Run quick an' have it over!"

*Ma mère* she's been de most happy womans in Saint Pierre w'en she hear dat.

"Run, Clément!" she say to me. "Run *vit', vit'*, down on de 'otel, bring him before your *père* he change his mind! T'ank God, now we goin' get him cure! Hurry! Hurry! . . ."

I run quick like some *lou'garou* chase me; in ten minute de *docteur* an' his Helectrobat been in de room of *mon père*. While I been gone de old man put his pants on, an' his night-shirt over de pants, an' now he lay on de bed an' groan somet'ing terrible. His eye she roll an' his hand she tr-r-ramble—I feel sorry for him, *certainement*!

De *docteur* he ain't pay no 'tention to dat; no, he only smile, an' put his helectrobat on a table side of de bed. Dat masheen she's in a wooden box, an' w'en *mon père* see it he look like someone just bring in ten pound of dynamite an' a hammer. He cross himself, an' take hold his rosary wit' his tr-r-ramblin' finger.

"*Mon Dil'*" he groan, "now I goin' for be execute, sure t'ing! Now I seen it come *bientôt*!"

"Courage, Narcisse, courage!" say *ma mère*. "I goin' for stay right here; Clément he stay here; Achille (dat's my brudder) he stay here, too, so nothin' ain't been go for hurt you. All w'at de *docteur* do been for make you well again, so you *capab'* go work. *Docteur Holt*, you *capab'* cure my man, eh?"

"Cure him? Sure I can cure him!" say de Hamerican. "My 'lectrobat cures anyting! Anyting at all, from sore t'roat

"He ain't goin' to die yet, I bet you. Ask him if he ever feel de 'lectricity." I put de question in *França* for *mon père*, an' one or two hundred odder questions, all 'bout de health. "Your fadder's trouble ain't *organique*," say de *docteur*, w'en he hear all de answer w'at I translate for him; "it's all in de nerve and brain—more 'special in de brain. I bet he walk so good like you, pretty soon."

Oh, such a happy womans w'at *ma mère*



DRAWN BY W. J. ENRIGHT

*Mon père* look like he bring in ten pound dynamite.

to fits. Rheumatism is dead easy for me," say he. "He'll be all right in half a dozen treatments, I mak' guarantee."

"So soon like one half *douzaine*?" ask *ma mère*, joyeusement.

"Maybe sooner; I seen cases what I cure in two—what I cure right off de first time. It's a sure t'ing. Lemme see de legs, please, what make all de trouble?"

*Mon père* he groan an' stick his legs out de bed. De *docteur* he roll up de pants of *mon père* an' rub de mussels w'at been all knotted up, an' *mon père* he holler like de *docteur* been kill him.

"Your old man got good lungs, anyway!" say de *docteur* wit' a smile, to me.

been w'en I tell her dat! Happy, happy! An' while I tell it de *docteur* he open up his wooden box, an' *Mon Di!* w'at he take out! Some batt'ry in a tin can; two big sponge for fasten on de patient wit' straps; a board wit' a handle w'at he call de "sweetch," an' from de batt'ry to each sponge some long green wire. De table look like some helectric-light works.

W'en *mon père* see all dat, his eye she look like de eye of some ox w'at been in de *abattoir*; his old, w'ite hair she bristle up like porkypine, an' his w'iskers tramble wit' de prayer he say: "Sainte Marie, priez pour moi! Saint Joseph, priez pour moi!"

De *docteur* he only smile, an' take de

sponge an' wet him in watter. Den he strap de two sponge tight on de feet of *mon père* an' put de sweetch-board handy. *Ma mère* she begin for get frighten herself; yet she ain't say nothin', but stand quiet, 'side of my brudder, an' look wit' scared eyes.

"So he's afraid of 'lectricity, is he?" say de *docteur*. "Even afraid of street-cars, eh? Well, you tell him I ain't goin' hurt him much. See, here's six places on de sweetch. De first make a very light current; I begin wit' dat one. Nex', she's a little stronger; an' so on, up gradual to number six. Six is pretty strong, yes, but it take sev'ral treatment to get dere, you un'stand? Yes? Well, den, you tell your fadder all what I say."

I tole *mon père* all, everyt'ing, an' try for comfort him, but it ain't no use; he only groan an' pray more as before.

"*Mistaire Docteur*," say I, "dis masheen get stronger, you say, de more you push de sweetch?"

"Yes—all de effect keep gettin' more an' more, all de way from zero up to five hundred vol—vol—volts."

"Volts! Dat's it! Dat's. w'at de *docteur* say: "Volts!"

"W'at place mak' de mos' cure?" I hask.

"Ummmm—well, I s'pose de most effect come at Number Six."

"Number Seex make de mos' good?"

"Yes!" say he wit' some annoyance, unwindin' de wire. "What for you ask so many questions?"

"Oh, nothing," I say careless, but I been do some big think, now I tole you! "*Mon Dit!*" think I, "w'at for *mon père* can't be cure right off quick, now, not wait a week? Perhaps he take one treatment an' never take anodder; all de trouble an' talk she been lost for *rien*. If de best eure come at de last place, why not mak' dat last place come first, hein? Get de cure *tout' suite!* *Mon père* he ain't goin' suffer, ba gollee, one more minute if I can help it! Don't I can make de cure just so good like de Hamerican *docteur*, only a lot quicker, me? Yes sir! I can! Yes sir, I will! says I.

Say! W'ile de *docteur*'s back been turn, w'at I done, me? I grab dat sweetch, an' say! I turn him—way to de six' place like lightning!

"OW! OW!! . . ." yell *mon père*, "Owwww! . . . Aie-e-e-e-EEE !!! like one crazy man, an' give one big jump, ba gollee, out de bed right on de floor wit' de sponges strapped on his feet. UP he bounce one yard high, like he been dancin', an' holler in *França*:

"Tak' it off, I'm one dead man! . . ." an' ba gollee, he made anodder jump troo de door! Say, *mistaire!* He jerk dat helectrobat off de table like she been one feather; de table she whack over an' everyt'ing roll on de floor; *mon père* he run down de hall like *diable* been after him—run wit' de sponges w'at been strapped to his feet, yes sir! De wires been strong, an' *Zut!* de helectrobat she whip along after him, bang! bang! BANG!!! . . . down de stair in t'ree jumps an' ba gollee right out in the street in his pants an' night-shirt; dat helectrocution-masheen it *ricochet* after him. His hollers sound like dat steam-piano w'at play in de *cirque*—an' run? . . . *Ouay, mossieur*, he mak' new record at Saint-Pierre, *mon père* did. I can run pretty fast myself, but I ain't catch *mon père* dat time; de *docteur* ain't catch him; ain't nobody catch him. Say, *mon père* he scoot in one big cloud dust an' yell an' flyin' leg, wit' big eemense crowd w'at chasse him, *vit', vit'*, down to de end of de street where is de Rivière Saint-Lawrence, he did, an' mak' one big DIVE—!

Hein? *Ouay, mossieur*, we pull him out *tout' suite*, dat big crowd pull him out by de wires—backward—an' one wire she broke, so *mon père* he hang by one leg comin' up de side of de wharf—but de helectricité she stop anyway.

Well, we got him clean up an' dig de mud out his ears in 'bout one hour. Nex' morning, p'raps it 5 o'clock, some big noise wake up me and Achille, w'at sleep wit' me.

"Hark!" say I, "W'at dat slam-crash down in the yard, hein?"

Achille he got up an' look.

"*Misericorde!*" say he. "It look like it been rainin' glass! De old man he's throw all his bottles out de window!"

"Now listen!" say I, an' w'at you t'ink? *Mon père* he's been go down de back stairs into de wood-shed. Den, pretty soon we hear de grin'-stone goin'—de old man he's

sharpen his axe, de axe w'at ain't been use' for so long!

He ain't come in for breakfas' w'en *ma m're* she call him; he grind an' grind de axe all de time we been eat. But w'en he finish he come in de kitchen, all dress in

w'at he do? Say, such a whack w'at he give me I fall wit' my chair backward on de floor; an' on de floor he keeck me two, t'ree time, an' dose keecks she ain't been no rheumatic keecks, now I goin' tole you!



DRAWN BY W. J. ENRIGHT

He mak' new record at Saint Pierre.

his Mackinaw an' moccasin', an' say wit' some 'shamed look:

"Mak' my kit ready for de woods, Em'erance; I been goin' start for Rivière du Loup *aujourd'zhui-même*."

"Goin' for take some orange wit' you?" I ask. "An' *mon p're*, you know, *mon p're*,

"Orange?" he holler. "Orange? Ba gollee, anyone say orange to me, *encore*, I break his neck."

*Ouai* *mossieur*, it's all been long time ago, but *mon p're*, you know, *mon p're*, it ain't been safe for say "Orange" to him yet, no, sir, ba gollee! . . .

## The Defection of Helen

BY WILLIAM MAC LEOD RAINÉ

Blandish, with his long black hair, wonderful eyes, and indefinable suggestion of genius, attracted a good deal of attention when he came into the Denver sleeper at Provo and established himself impressively in Section No. 6. The slight frown of abstraction on his grave, handsome face might have been taken to imply distaste at

this furtive regard of which he was the object. He had long since accepted the stares of the multitude as one of the penalties of a greatness that could not be concealed. None the less he would have much resented being taken as a matter of course. His cultivated Byronic *négligé* was a tacit confession of vanity. To be the observed

of observers might be at times a bore, but not to be would have been a calamity.

He settled back to enjoy a magazine article on "The Fundamental Ego," from which he anticipated keen pleasure. Since he knew its author, and had the greatest confidence in him, he was assured the article would prove caustic, witty, and profound. The signature at the conclusion was F. E. Blandish. For, though esoteric poetry was his major, he was by way of calling himself, also, the founder of a new school of philosophy. Perhaps this is the place to say that modesty was not one of his outstanding virtues.

Preparatory to reading, his glance casually swept the car without expectation.

Some suggestion of familiarity in the back of a head two seats in front of him held his wandering gaze. His eyes brightened as he waited for the owner of that wavy mass of reddish bronze hair to turn. She did presently, at least so far as to allow him to catch a quarter profile glimpse of a face that he had often in other days seen light up with admiration of him. He had spent two years determining whether he would marry its charming owner. Then she had suddenly disappeared. It had been a long time since he had seen her last, but there were moments when he still thought of her with keen regret. She had been so fresh and piquant, yet with a mind so plastic to his touch, that he still had it in his intentions to find her and do her the honor of marrying her some day. Poor child, she deserved her reward, he admitted! She had accepted his *credo* loyally, and had even subjected herself to unfounded gossip on account of her devotion to him. Helen Ladd had been very young and unsophisticated then. It was thoroughly characteristic of Blandish, that though he had known gossip must follow the friendly intimacy of this impulsive girl with him he had not shielded her from it by leaving her alone.

Certainly the young woman's face promised a capacity for expression. She was leaning back, chin in hand, a tender, dreamy smile of contented happiness mirrored in her eyes. Apparently she had for the moment given herself up to memories intimate and sweet beyond words. In the crowded car she sat alone with love.

A voice, very familiar and welcome once, snatched her back to earth.

"Now, I call this a gift of the gods, Helen. For here two kindred souls have drifted together in this wilderness of the commonplace. Surely the stars are propitious, O Heaven sent!"

Helen flushed, felt the flood of color burn her cheeks and despised herself for it. The last person in the world she would have wished to meet at that moment was Francis Estancia Blandish, but to show the least concern at his coming was a subtle flattery she longed to deny him.

Without waiting for the formality of an invitation he seated himself beside her. He assumed, as a matter of course, that her heart was in a flutter of delight at such good fortune. Time was when his assumption would not have missed the truth.

"If I believed in the mediæval superstitions I should call it providential," he went on, gayly. "Positively providential! Whoever would have expected in this desert to find one of the elect? And best of all, you, Helen, my soul-knit friend of friends."

Her slanted glance carried cool-eyed criticism. "Dear me, don't you think 'providential' rather a large word to describe a chance meeting of acquaintances, Mr. Blandish?" suggested the young woman, an edge of scorn in her voice.

His eyebrows arched in vast surprise.

"Mister Blandish? My name is Francis."

Simplicity had been a part of the cult, and the invariable rule of its professors had been to use each other's first names.

"And acquaintances? Helen, what does this mean?" he demanded, his low, rich voice vibrant with feeling. "We, whose souls have been perfectly attuned, united, one to one, in that undying fellowship that seeks only the naked truths of deepest meaning, are we acquaintances? Or are we not rather kindred souls, groping hand in hand for life's ultimate revelations, digging—"

"I don't think I grope for all that today, Mr. Blandish. I expect I'm not a kindred soul any more," she told him, flippantly.

He was perplexed, amazed, until he remembered that she had fled from him to hide her wounded heart, and naturally

had resented his acceptance of her disappearance. She was not the first woman who had loved him, nor the last.

"But you are—you are, my dear Helen. Surely not in vain was I for some years your guide into the mysteries of the moral and the intellectual universe. I know whereof I speak. The world may have seduced you from the contemplation of ultimate realities, but do not tell me that the loyal friend who drew her mental stimulus from my unworthy self for two years is a traitor to the light."

Again the girl flushed, despite herself, scorched by the memory of those futile years when she had given a good deal more than her intellectual life into his keeping. The man had obsessed her, as he had the other women. He was a parasite, who lived on the flattery of devotion, and of that she had given him without stint. She had fed to satiety his inordinate craving to dominate the mental activities of attractive women. Listening to his rapt prose poems, she had dreamed dreams and conceived a relation that was not, but she could not say that he had ever explicitly made her promises. She knew now that he had monopolized her time with no definite intention of marriage. Yet she knew that though she had never loved him she would have accepted him to her sorrow if he had only said the word. Her pliancy was an incredible shame to her now.

The thing was explicable only on the hypothesis that his shallow brilliancy and dominant personality had fascinated her. His boundless ambition, self-trust, and audacity; a facility that amounted almost to intuition in seizing and presenting new and daring thought attractively; this together with his marvelously magnetic voice and eye, had constituted his stock in trade. She had been a susceptible girl, eager for the intellectual life and just waking to its attractions. Hearing him read his poems one afternoon she had accepted him immediately at his own valuation. He had a message that the world needed. She was sure of it. Of course, he had promised her tremendous returns for any investment she might make with him. Analyzing him now with cool detachment, she recognized his vanity as insatiable and his claims as

preposterous. But she had not known it then. His brilliant egotism gained a following by reason of the very largeness of its demands. And she knew that if he had imposed himself on her and others, he had not less imposed on himself.

"I see it all," Blandish was continuing fatuously, "you have lost touch, have fallen out of step with the chosen few in the grand forward march. You need to drink again at the fountain source of inspiration. My dear Helen—"

"I wish you would n't call me your dear Helen," snapped the young woman who needed to drink again at the Blandish fountain of inspiration. "My name is—"

His heavy voice, unctuous with forgiveness, bore her to silence. "You will always be Helen to me, and always dear, for the sake of old times, no matter how you may relapse from the call of honor."

"That's very good of you—and quite gratuitous," she murmured.

Blandish looked at her with the mournful magnanimity of a great soul sorely tried by her childishness. Charity oozed from him unctuously. He resolved to use the personal touch; a little of it had gone a long way once. Perhaps she was hungering for a sign from him of his continued interest in her. He laid a kindly hand on hers under cover of the magazine and gave it a gentle pressure.

"I wonder if you know how dear that sweet friendship has been to me, how it has cheered me on the lonely path of isolation I have been compelled to tread, how much dearer indeed than friendship—"

Helen had withdrawn her hand quietly but decisively. "I think I know. Certainly I had much rather you did n't take the trouble to tell me."

"My dearest Helen, sister soul that on a time I found wandering in the darkness of space and led into the light and the sweetness of the larger life—"

Her gray eyes met his very steadily, without the least embarrassment.

"I think we had better understand each other, Mr. Blandish. The days you seem anxious to recall are altogether in the past. I have buried them with no regrets except for my folly in having ever yielded myself to you for a moral and an intellectual guide. I ask you not to presume on my

girlish folly to attempt to re-establish a relation that ought never to have been."

He lent her the pained tolerant patience one gives a fretful child. She might say what she pleased without disturbing his conviction of his own greatness or his certainty of ultimately establishing again his ascendancy.

"But if it is my duty, if I dare not let you follow this path you have chosen, if I must save you in spite of yourself—what then?"

There was a glint of scornful amusement in her eyes, not less at herself than at him. For she could not forget that the time had been when all this rhodomontade had been as a new gospel to her.

"Don't you think you take yourself a little too seriously, Mr. Blandish?"

His deep, beautiful eyes mourned over her. That such an idea should cross her mind, far less reach expression, showed how much she had relapsed.

"I think that you need to be saved from yourself, and that it is your fortunate kismet that I am here to do it," he said, with the same fine conviction of energy in his winning voice that once had played on her emotions like deft fingers on the strings of a harp.

She had been conscious of a growing resentment against his attitude toward her. The perverse impulse in her to let him see himself as she saw him grew dominant. Why should she spare him? He never spared others.

"Ah, but that is your intense vanity," she murmured.

Blandish stiffened. "My—what?"

"I said 'your vanity,'" she explained, her voice and manner quite unruffled. "You know, of course, that you have a vanity that is inordinate."

"What do you mean? I know nothing of the kind," he gasped, his serene self-satisfaction for once disturbed at her presumption.

"I was wrong. You don't know it. But that does not affect the fact. Indeed, it goes to prove it."

"What do you mean, Miss Ladd?" he repeated. "Are you mad? Of all things, I am the most free of vanity. Faults I have, many of them, perhaps—"

"Yes," she agreed gently.

He flushed angrily. "They are to be taken for granted in a nature like mine, an untrammelled soul that soars above the petty and vaults above the groveling; but still faults, I concede, even if generous ones"—Helen smiled—"and perhaps to be excused, therefore. But of vanity, I thank my pagan stars I am entirely free."

She laughed, a mocking little ripple that was as a spur to a willing horse.

"One expects to be misunderstood. That, of course! It is inevitable for any great soul that lives in advance of his day. Luther, Galileo, Jensen—"

"And Blandish."

"If you like," he whipped on hotly. "All of us misunderstood, all persecuted. The world crucifies the prophet of truth. So much the worse for the world. But that you, one of my earliest disciples, who know me and my lofty purposes, should turn Judas—that is the tragedy of life."

She laughed delightedly. "You make it very dramatic, and all because Judas said that your bump of appreciation was well developed."

"*Et tu, Brute,*" he sighed, in his best tragic manner.

"You had better save some of your choicest," she advised, gaily. "I'm not through yet. Indeed, I'm just beginning. You used to urge us so earnestly to seek truth and disclose it, no matter whom it hurt, that I'm going to waste a little now. Force of association, you know."

Her whimsical smile missed him. He was frowning gloomily into space.

"Let me see. Where were we before this digression? Oh, yes, your vanity! There really is n't anything to say about it, except that it is you. It is colossal and, in a way, magnificent. Your other faults, except your selfishness; dwarf beside it. Everything you do and say and think, the way you walk and dress and eat—'Vanity of vanities,' saith the preacher, 'all is vanity.'"

"I am sorry, Miss Ladd, that you have so misconceived my character," he said, with dignity. "I am the more sorry because it convinces me that I have been deceived in you."

"You have," she conceded, cheerfully. "You thought me an 'affinity' and a 'kindred spirit,' and it turns out that I'm only

a plain, everyday Philistine and benighted enough to be glad of it."

"You were good enough to speak of my other faults a moment ago, Miss Ladd. I think you particularized my selfishness," he said, stiffly. "I had supposed the greatest generosity that which gives itself. Have I not always spent myself liberally? Have I ever refused to spread the light, ever failed to speak the word?"

"Never—and always to the glory of Francis E. Blandish."

Having set her hand to the plow, she had no intention of turning back to save his feelings.

"What you demand of your followers is admiration. You call it soul affinity and sympathetic communion of spirits, but what it amounts to is plain worship. They are to feed your self-esteem. They are to absorb you as a gospel. Criticism is treason. You expect them to take your opinion as the final word, you expect to control their whole moral nature so that they live only through you. Those who yield themselves so are the elect. You favor them by taking all they have to offer for years and giving them nothing worth while in return. Plain people call that sort of thing 'selfishness.' I wonder, Mr. Blandish, why there were no men in your society of the chosen sisterhood of souls."

"The coarser spirit of man is not yet attuned—"

"Fiddlesticks! I've heard that before. The truth is that you're a woman's man, Mr. Blandish: a kind of fireside tabby cat that grows uneasy when men are around. You know that men would ridicule your pretensions, that their clearer and more independent minds would puncture your esoteric claims, and that the vital manliness in them would jeopardize your position even with the women. So you wisely avoid them."

Blandish rose, his vanity offended to the marrow. Never before had he been made to wince at so many direct home thrusts. He would withdraw the light of his countenance until with solitude and reflection repentance would come to her.

"Since you think so poorly of me it is not necessary to continue this conversation, Miss Ladd. It is scarcely a profitable one."

"No, I suppose not. You are beyond hope," she admitted. "But, here comes my husband. I think you used to know each other at college. I'm not Miss Ladd any more, but Mrs. Richards, as I tried to tell you some time ago."

The face of the poet was a study in emotions. Disappointment, chagrin, resentment, mapped themselves on his countenance. So this was the key to the change in her feelings for him.

A tall, broad-shouldered young fellow was striding down the aisle. There was nothing the least bit esoteric about him. The square, salient jaw, the good-humored frank eyes, the sunburn in his cheeks, marked him for a healthy, clean-blooded outdoor gentleman not given to introspection. It was good to see the way his face lighted when he saw his wife of a month.

"Have I been long, Nell? I met a young fellow from the Philippines and we got to talking."

"It has n't seemed long. I've been having an interesting talk myself. Mr. Blandish and I have been doing a bit of character study together that I've enjoyed immensely."

"Whom have you been dissecting now?" Richards wanted to know.

"Oh, one of the minor poets. By the way, you know Mr. Blandish, I think."

"I should think I did. How are you, Effie?" The name was an apt college corruption of his initials, F. E. "Did n't expect to meet you out here in Mormon land, though you did used to circulate pretty freely among the ladies. Getting out a new book of poems? 'Dulcets from the Desert,' or something of that sort? Ought to make a hit and double the membership of the Blandish club in no time. Don't you think so, Nell?"

"Oh, I don't think the kindred soul club is in danger, Will," she replied. "Now and then perhaps an unworthy member slips away to matrimony or some other lost condition, but there are always new recruits to join the sisterhood."

"Effie" chose to resent what she said. But he could only smile feebly. Ridicule was a weapon that he could not parry nor forgive. Even humor, of which he had no appreciation, he distrusted.

"I really think I must be going," he

said. "I have some work to do. Perhaps I'll see you later."

"If you must go, Mr. Blandish," Helen smiled. "And please think over what I have said. I know you have studied the poet more than I have, but I really think that's a side of him you have always missed. Perhaps you have been a little lost in admiration."

Blandish retired in a white rage to write a poem on "The Defection of Judas." Helen borrowed the magazine he had left and used it as a screen to squeeze Richards' big brown hand.

"Oh, I'm glad, Billie, you're a nice, clean, common, everyday man."

"Thanks, awfully. I'll try to be satisfied with myself if you are," he laughed.

"I detest that *poseur*, Billie. He's a fraud, and a dangerous one."

Richards' eyes took in the minor poet with a glance of contempt. "He's rather a sissy, I think, and a bit of a cad. Glad you don't like the fellow, Nell. I had an idea, somehow, you rather fancied him."

"He's eaten up with conceit. You should have heard me tell him the truth about himself, Billie. He's simply furious. He'll never speak to me again as long as he lives, glory be. Did you have a nice talk with the Philippine man?"

"Yes; he's a young officer that's been out there several years. Hello, there's the first call for supper. Let's go in before the diner fills up."

## For the Promotion of Billy

BY CATHERINE CARR

There was no doubt but that the Gardner affair got all that was coming to it. Had not Billy Gardner, one of the so widely exploited young principals, been ecstatically happy, he would have said "and then some." Being, however, in a blissful state that allowed the world to go hang did it but leave him Nancy, Billy accepted the riot of head lines which announced what was popularly termed his folly, as a part of the price of rapture, which was well worth it.

Their context was in suchwise:

SON OF A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE  
MARRIES A SHOW GIRL

WILBUR REID GARDNER ELOPES WITH  
NANCY CARTER

BRIDE A MEMBER OF THE  
PRETTY PURITANS COMPANY

THE GARDNERS IMPLACABLE

Also there were photographs—Billy in hunting togs, in running rig, along with his sprinting record, in the absurd get-up he had worn at a Society Circus—secured

only Heaven and the reporters knew how. Personally Billy doubted any celestial knowledge in the matter; as well as in the garbled accounts of episodes that had been raked from his college career, closed the spring before.

Nancy's pretty face was there, too, of course. Demure in a poke bonnet, looking the spirit of coquetry over a great ermine muff. Most charming in both, she made it all very understandable: to the unprejudiced observer, that is. Naturally, the Gardners were not of this mould, and their sense of *noblesse oblige* was very acute. They had n't possessed it long enough to have its edges smoothed any. Billy's mother, a lady of unlimited ambitions and accurate etiquette, forgot the repose of good form and went into hysterics. His proper elder brother and sisters, all well married, resolutely set their faces from him, and Thomas Gardner, that eminent head of trusts and manipulator of stocks, reached a state of fury that carried him near to apoplexy. In his great hands he crushed and rent the paper which first presented the news, and all articles of furniture that stood in the way of his first mad pacing bore long thereafter the marks of his sturdily shod feet.

He, too, dealt in repudiation and disinheritance; and he cursed his son in terms as comprehensive and entire as the famous anathema put upon the Jackdaw of Reims. He was of forthright habit and he promptly placed it all on paper which he addressed to Billy. He added, however, a saving clause which had to do with the annulment of his marriage to "that actress creature." This clause was also tersely set forth in a business like document which he forwarded to the lady thus unflatteringly designated. A large sum of money was further mentioned therein. To be strictly accurate its contents were confined to two words—"How much?"

Both these communications were returned torn across but without word of comment, the envelope writ large in Billy's hand—showing that the chip had not flown over far from the block—whereupon that young man's possessions were packed and sent to him, and the portals of the magnificent structure which was the Gardners' *habitat* were formally and firmly closed to him. The Gardners felt that they had done only the right thing by one who had so disgraced their name, and they were all rather keen on doing the right thing.

Other sensations arose and after a few weeks the Gardner elopement was seldom spoken of save among the "Puritans" who were agreed that Nancy could easily have done better, and among Billy's kin whose opinion was unanimous that Billy could not have done worse.

And they held to this, though skilled research proved the sum of Nancy's offense to be her profession. She was from the South somewhere, had been a student in a dramatic school, and her stage experience was limited to the few months with "The Pretty Puritans." Furthermore, the investigator with the best, or worst, will in the world could not attach to her the repute of midnight suppers and like indiscretions commonly attributed to the young women of her profession.

Still, she had smiled and postured for the pleasing of the public, and this the Gardners judged enough to place her forever in outer darkness.

"*Noblesse oblige.*" Mrs. Thomas Gardner said again with a tightening of her thin lips, as she denuded the sumptuous apart-

ments of Billy's photographs and other traces of his one-time occupancy.

Strangely enough, the space occasioned by this casting out of Billy was wider in his father's life than in his mother's, albeit Thomas Gardner was a man whom the world named as giving heart and brain to the acquisition of money and power. How much this heaping up had been for the youngest bearer of his name, the old man himself did not know until he had signed his own against Billy's inheritance.

Billy and his father had been little together, and on the face of things he had not the qualities to make for their companionship that were possessed by Thomas II, who gave himself to business with a singleness of purpose which bade fair to outstrip even his father's attainments; nor the ambitious characteristics of the daughters who had, by judicious marriages, bound a judge and a house of decayed aristocracy to the Gardner interests; yet the old man's indulgence and pride had been, most openly, for Billy.

He, the youngest born, had come after the struggle for place and power was over, and the mark of the *nouveau riche* was nowhere upon him. He bore himself easily in all circumstances, was never conscious of his clothes and had a skill at the gentlemanly sports—hunting, polo and squash—which was rich incense to the elder Gardner.

His own youth had been a barren one and he had determined that Billy's should lack for nothing. What it really had lacked was not included in the old man's perspective. His terse summing up was that he had worked like a slave for his children, and then Billy's behavior was mentioned with hot objurgation.

This last was always more furious when he most missed his son; when the silence of the great spaces of his house seemed strained and waiting for Billy's cheerful whistle and the sound of his step; and when his favorite canvas-back choked him with the possibility of Billy knowing actual want.

Not but that it would serve him right, the ungrateful young dog, he would insist against the torture of the suggestion—only—Oh, well, damn things anyhow— At



DRAWN BY HOWARD HEATH

"*Noblesse Oblige*," Mrs. Gardner said.

this point something was usually broken if anything breakable chanced to be in reach. The "Old Man's" temper kept both household and office force in a state of edged uncertainty.

But now and again moments came to him when the tape slipped unheeded through his fingers while his mind gave itself to some tender recollection of Billy's childish days, and these were even harder to bear. He had been such a bright little chap, had Billy, and he had planned and worked to give him so much—a high place in society, wealth, power. And now the plans were a heap of fragments and Billy gone out of his life. All for a girl! And such a girl!

At first he had seen light in the hope that when she found Billy's income was stopped

she would accept the offer he had made; but after six months of silence the hope failed of uplift and the finality of Billy's loss laid heavily upon him.

At the end of this slow-moving space of time Thomas II came to his father, his face livid with anger. The junior Thomas was featured sharply, like his mother, and had not the senior's habit of red rages. That his grievance was voiced in sibilant tones instead of roars took nothing from his deeply rooted sense of it.

"That boy—Wilbur—" he said. The friendliness of "Billy" was refused the culprit whenever his family thought of it—"He is absolutely shameless."

"Huh! What's he done now?" the old man grunted. Inwardly he winced. His own large and various range of expletive

was at the service of his recreant son, but the beat of his blood was involuntarily against another's.

"He has become—think of it—a chauffeur at a public garage!"

"The devil he has! Fine recommendation for a college education. Well, he can deliver the goods all right, I guess. He's won enough races with the things."

"But, great heavens, think of the disgrace!" The younger Thomas' thought of it was vividly evident.

The elder Thomas had an irrational impulse toward opposition.

"Disgrace! It's honest work ain't it?"

"Honest," his son echoed, "what's that to do with it?"

"Little enough," the head of trusts felt compelled to agree.

"And think of us—our humiliation. Why, Marie's cousin, Algy Van Zandt, needed a substitute—his man was sick—and these people sent Wilbur out to him.

He told me he was so shocked that he could n't say anything."

"Would n't take much to shock a man named Algy," Gardner *père* murmured.

"Of course the only thing he could do was to pretend not to know him," the son went on with judicious deafness, "and Wilbur acted as if he had never seen him before. Just like a professional. Sunk to that already. It's awful; Marie feels terribly about it. There's never been any disgrace in her family."

"Nothing public."

The old man's memory recalled divers checks. Marie was the daughter of a senator who, by reformers, was listed among the Gardner possessions. His son was again diplomatic.

"Something has got to be done. It's all a scheme of that woman's, of course. She knows we can't stand for any such arrangement as that. I hate to give in, but I'll pay them an allowance myself if they'll promise to live away from New York."



DRAWN BY HOWARD HEATH

His wrath deflected to them.

I'll speak to Burton about it at once."

Thomas Gardner drew his brows and set a decisive jaw line. Thomas II was efficient but he was inclined also to be officious. It was a quality that jarred strongly upon the elder.

"It is my affair. I shall deal with them as I see fit," he said.

"But—but the disgrace is ours as well, and Marie—"

"Marie has no strings on me," was the terse rejoinder. "And he may dig ditches if he comes to it. I've said my last word. Until that woman releases Billy she shall never touch a penny of my money—directly or indirectly—You hear?"

His tone being calculated to waken the Seven Sleepers, any pretense of opposite nature was impossible. Thomas II was after all a man of discretion. He assented and withdrew. A word of argument would have fired a mine of volcanic possibilities.

The old man sat alone with it seething within; bent low under the vast burden of defeat.

This, then, was what it all had come to, after a man had fought long years for success. A hotel instead of a home—he had sudden revulsion against the great walls that had once been his pride—a wife given over to social triumphs, one son defiant, the other reaching for the reins. Pleasant lot—surely. Daughters, too, with affection showing for their share. This fault at least, was not Billy's. He had put aside his inheritance for love—or what the boy thought was love. He was, of course, bewitched by a—a siren. The term struck him and he mentally reserved it for his unacknowledged daughter-in-law. Most certainly a siren. No boy in his sober senses could have acted so. It was all a portion of husks and the measure of power that hung in his balance weighed little against it, yet he grasped at this remnant eagerly. He was master still, and so he would show them.

His immediate demonstration led to the resignation of a valued clerk and the confusion of many others. When he stamped off to lunch the sigh of relief which came from his suite was of concerted volume.

The steak of Thomas Gardner's order

was to his well-known taste; so also was his bottle of Pilsner, but they failed to soothe in the least degree his offended spirit. He walked out and down the steps of the club with all the savor gone from his life; walked out to have the sight of Billy, clad as chauffeur, seated in a waiting automobile, take him like a blow between the eyes.

His previous knowledge of Billy's occupation sufficed not at all to soften the shock of seeing him so employed, and that he himself had once labored with his hands did not remove the menial stigma from this pursuit of his son's. He halted and his great bulk quivered, but his dry lips refused speech. Billy too was dumb, and his young face showed white and strained.

Billy had been fond of his father in a careless sort of way, which was not so careless now. Billy had grown more serious in some ways; but the strength of pride was strong in each, so they took the breath of a moment of seeming indefinite length without yielding.

Then two young men came down the steps. They had been close companions of Billy's former butterfly days, but they now stared at him without sign of recognition and passed on.

They broke the spell that seemed to hold old Gardner and he too went on, the wrath which might reasonably have been supposed to fall upon Billy, deflected to them. How dare they cut Billy—his son! The son of Thomas Gardner! The fools—empty-headed cads! He would show them the cost. He held the father of one of them in the hollow of his hand. He could close it and that damned popinjay would come whining to him. And he would do it too. All ultimatums and oaths regarding ditch-digging had somehow erased themselves. He was bent to the full upon proving the danger of affronting the son of Thomas Gardner. When the remembrance that to the world Billy no longer occupied that exalted position, and that his own word had removed him from it, finally thrust itself upon him, he refused the responsibility. Not by his act had it come about, but by that creature's—that unspeakable siren's. Like enough Thomas had been right. It was an exasperating habit he had; and this work of Billy's was but a part of some deep-laid plan of hers

to extort a larger offer. Well, she should have it. Any amount—a million if she insisted. They all had their price, women like her. Such cases filled the front pages all too often to leave one in ignorance. He would go to her and tell her plainly to name her price to give Billy back to him. That he was due at a director's meeting was useless detail. All financial matters were beaten down by the hunger in the old man's heart for Billy's "Hello Dad."

He did not know his son's address, but he had an office boy of remarkable parts who within an hour returned with it and a hansom. The old man got in with his breath coming quick and his hands shaking. They were fairly aching, those hands of his, for contact with the hands of his boy.

Billy's place of abode was in an obscure part of town. The journey there gave Thomas Gardner time to arrange his plan for the rescue of Billy in detail. The eloquence of his check book covered all important points, and in the little things he would trust to luck.

Four flights of stairs upon which children were assembled; also a dog or two and a mangy looking kitten led up to the Gardner *père's* confidence grew with his laboriously accomplished ascent. Young people with the luxurious tastes of these two must be hourly revolted by such things. His idea of an actress' surroundings was distinctly yellow, being made up of broughams, diamond-sunbursts, and bushels of roses. Billy's inclinations of course he knew, and

his trail through life had not attested their simplicity. There could be no doubt but that they would welcome release from such environments as these. He knocked on the door bearing Billy's card, filled with his old sense of power and achievement. Whatever he willed must be.

The door was opened by a young woman who was very trim about the waist in a white frock turned in at the throat and up at the sleeves. She had the appearance of being very busy about something and there was a thin dust of flour on her arms. The effect was far from unbecoming. She had also, an abundance of charms, among which her eyes, which were brown, her mouth which was both sweet and firm, and her hair which had all the best shades of red and gold and brown, were the sort worth going a long way to see.

Recognition showed itself in her eyes and they widened for an instant with a hint of apprehension, but she had the heritage of good blood and her head went bravely up.

"Come in," she said and smiled.

Now it was a matter of history among her acquaintance that things happened when this young woman smiled. They began to do so at this time.

The arrogance of Thomas Gardner's wealth beat weaker and he found himself growing red and confused.

"I—I'm—You—you are—"

"I'm Billy's wife," she supplied.

"Yes—Why, yes—of course," he said, weakly admitting the relationship he was marshaling his forces to destroy.



DRAWN BY HOWARD HEATH  
The door was opened by a young woman.

"And you are—Billy's father. Won't you come in?"

Thomas Gardner squeezed through the narrow hall into the tiny sitting-room which he seemed to crowd. He sat down on an indicated chair but he clung to his hat.

The furnishings of the room were extremely plain, but they were neatly ordered and there were many photographs of Billy about, together with one of Nancy in a white frock with a frill of lace at the neck, but none in stage costume. The old man noticed that vaguely—it was not quite as he had expected—and also the aroma of something cooking which penetrated from the not-distant kitchen. Instead of squalor he had thought to find was an atmosphere of coziness that suddenly made his own gigantic structure, where the kitchens were somewhere beyond his ken, seem very barren.

He looked again, beneath his shaggy brows, at Nancy. She sat opposite with the light from the window very good to her rippling hair, and her eyes met his own steadily, seriously, yet with a smile flecking their amber depths.

They vanquished the check-book line of argument entirely and forced a readjustment of tactics. It was not of money he must speak to this girl, but of sacrifice. He must base his appeal upon the injury this marriage had done, was doing, Billy. The old man had not much knowledge of feminine nature, but this he felt in the dim unused recesses of his soul. Yet his ultimate intent was not shifted. Pretty and true, as she seemed, she was still what Mrs. Gardner had described, "that impossible creature, an actress."

He cleared his throat portentously. Nancy remained silent.

"I—I—No doubt you can guess why I have come," he advanced.

"I'm not a Yankee, so I'm not very good at guessing—still I reckon I know. You object to our marriage."

"Yes. Exactly. You must see yourself—You appear a sensible young woman—how—unsuitable it is."

Nancy shook her head.

"I'm afraid I can't. You see he loves me and I love him: that seems reason enough for any marriage. And we're

very happy, even here. We'd be entirely so, if you all would forgive Billy. Truly we don't care for the money—so much—though it is a good thing to have around—but we can get along all right without it while we have each other. When people feel that way, it seems most suitable from my—I think I may say, our point of view: Billy's and mine."

"But—I think you scarcely understand—how you are injuring my son. You have cut him off from his family, caused him to lose his social position, forced him into a menial's work."

The old man choked a little over the list of her enormities. The girl's eyes were so honest. Still, it was the truth. She could not deny it.

"He says he enjoys it—the work. He had the choice of being a chauffeur or a clerk, and he said he could n't stand being shut up all the time," Nancy defended.

"He may tell you so; he may even think so himself, now; but it can't last. It is impossible. The time must come when he will feel what he has lost, and reproach you for the—the ostracism from his class," he finished with an unconscious quoting of his wife.

Nancy's mouth was compressed a little at the corners.

"And in view of this—you propose—"

"That you release him. It can easily be arranged and—and in time you will see that it is the best for you both—You may depend upon me to—er—that is, I will see that you are well provided for—"

Nancy's eyes made this business proposition come hard.

"You suggested something of the sort before. It did n't meet Billy's approval, I remember."

"Of course not: Billy's a gentleman." Billy's father obviously took to himself the credit of Billy's status. "He will stand by his word. But if you should agree—for his sake—complain of being tired of this sort of life—as you must be!"

"But I'm not," Nancy denied firmly, "I like it, and I'm getting to be a splendid cook. I can make croquettes and a lovely veal stew—I've got it cooking now—and it does n't cost anything hardly. Billy says it is better than the *ragouts* your *chef* makes; but of course Billy is n't an im-



DRAWN BY HOWARD HEATH

"I don't think I've done so badly by Billy."

partial judge." Nancy conceded this with a tender smile. "You see, I could n't say I'm tired of, it because I'm not. I was never so happy in my life."

"Yes, you—but Great God, girl"—Gardner roared; he flung down his hat and rose to tower high above her. "You don't understand; you're wrecking all I've spent my life for; I had n't a chance myself, and I've worked to give him the right to hold up his head with the best of them. It was all I had to work for—and now—Today I saw two young fools who used to be proud enough to know him, cut him dead—Him—Billy—my boy! You say you love him, but it strikes me it is a mighty poor sort of love that does that for him."

Nancy had risen, too, and she had grown rather white, but she still faced him bravely. She steadied her hand on the back of her chair and spoke gently.

"Yes, I suppose it does seem a poor sort to you, and I know I've caused him to lose a lot, and yet—Will you let me weigh things a bit? You have worked to give him a place among—if not the best—the highest. You've sent him to college and given him unlimited spending money. Yes, I know. Billy's told me all about it. The 'best old dad in the world,' he calls you; but was n't your kindness a little mistaken sometimes? You never objected to the way he lived, his dissipations, nor his idleness. He's never told me that, but I could see it; and I'm afraid you never taught him respect for women. Why, when I first met him he did n't seem to think any woman entitled to it—"

"The young scoundrel—he did n't—"

It was the deeply ingrained manhood of Billy's father that protested.

"Oh, yes he did, but I soon taught him better. I saw from the first that it was n't so much what he lacked as it was the fault of his training—or lack of it. I know now that you meant well for Billy, but you were always busy," Nancy added apologetically.

"Yes, yes, I was always busy," the old man muttered and let fall his eyes.

"And I—I liked him, and so I tried to help him. I had ideals for him, too. Funny, is n't it, for a show-girl to have ideals; but I did n't start out with the in-

tention of being just a show girl, you know. I was studying seriously, Shakespeare and all that, but the cotton crop failed and I had n't any more money and my uncle had fought my hopes so furiously that I would n't ask him. He thinks I'm a disgrace to the family, too. We're not thought so badly of down home, though, we Carters. So I took that engagement to help out for the time. I was saving to go on at school next season. Then I met Billy, and I did n't care so much about elevating the stage after that. I—I'm sorry about taking him away from his folks," she added tremulously. "I don't see how you all can let it. He's such a dear fellow, but I can't see so much to regret about the loss of his social position. He does n't drink scarcely any now. He's busy, and in his spare time we read a good deal together. Why, when I first met him he did n't even know who wrote *Vanity Fair*! And when we've saved money enough we're going down to Texas, my old home, and live out in the open—healthy, clean, lives, I hope—and now he honors all women, for his mother's sake—and mine. I think," she went on slowly, "and I wish you might think so too, that I care enough for Billy to give him up if it were best for him; but, in spite of all I've made him lose, I don't think I've done so badly for Billy."

Thomas Gardner had listened under stress of a fierce conflict of emotions—anger first at her arraignment of him, vaguely reaching comprehension; slow conviction that led to sympathy. The crust of his worldliness broke up and was swept down in the flood that welled from the forgotten springs of his heart. He saw many things with a great clearness—most plainly and curiously, he saw that Nancy was the image of Rosie whom he had loved before the ambitious and stylish daughter of the new foreman had crossed his path. A strange alchemy of memory, it was in truth, for Rosie's eyes had been blue and her smile no such marvel of charm. Anyway, Rosie would have made delicious smelling veal-stews for a hungry man; Rosie would have lived close to a man's life, like this girl, and kept it clean. And was it not well for the son to have this portion of good that the father had missed?

"No, I'm damned if you have?" he

burst out and caught her hands in his great clasp, "only I think I can help you to do better—in some ways."

"Oh!" Nancy gasped. "You—mean—really—"

And then Billy appeared at the door, whistling. He stopped, staring; amazed first, then joy.

"Hello, Nan. Hello, dad. What in the world's this?"

They rushed to meet him, the old man laying the heavy hand of affection on his shoulder; Nancy clinging with eager fingers to his sleeve.

"It's a partnership—for the promotion of Billy," she cried.

"It's just that," the old man corroborated, huskily, "Thomas Gardner and daughter."

Then Nancy kissed him.

## Yellow Silk

BY IZOLA FORRESTER

The road from Santa Juana to the New Mexican border is a long and devious route, if you go by way of the Jalapa pass.

It is the official route. The general trend of public traffic lies that way. It is an easy, cleanly road, and is safely guarded from the predatory brigand by courteous, efficient *rurales* in full panoply of office, said panoply being both effective and picturesque, and as visible to the naked and watchful eye of the predatory brigand as the flame-colored agave blossoms that dot the hills of Jalapa.

But to persons in a hurry, or in an unsociable mood, there is another route, neither clean nor easy, nor safely guarded. Not being a public highway, the *rurales* do not bear it in mind, except on rare occasions when two governments unite in fretful and active coöperation to stamp out the yellow-silk trade from their mutual border land. Then does the picturesque *rurale* become fretful and active also, and under stress of constabulary duty to be done, he leaves the road of Jalapa, and rides on the trail of yellow-silk up and down the Madres of Chihuahua.

It was past midnight when the yellow-silk train out of Santa Juana reached the northern slope of El Dorado.

The mules were tired. Once the big-boned gray at the rear stumbled heavily over a rolling stone, and would have dropped to its knees if Danny had not caught the bridle. He waited behind the rest, and carefully cinched the hamper straps under its belly, steadyng the hamper with one hand as he went on up the trail.

A small new moon shone to the southwest, one crescent tip seeming to touch the peak of a shadowy, violet mountain.

Below El Dorado, New Mexico lay, a still, flat, land here at the border, with a silvery tracery across it in the moonlight where the Snake river cut through the desert.

Danny took off his hat when the train of mules came to a halt on a bit of plateau, and stared back at the crescent moon and the violet mountain.

Just beyond that particular mountain lay Santa Juana. He grinned happily, with half-closed, retrospective eyes, and whistled a sweet, tantalizing bar or so of music to himself, as he smoothed the flank of the big gray mule, and waited to see what the halt was for.

It was a Mexican dance air. They had played it at Lorado's two nights before, and he had danced with the girl with the flower in her hair. It was a red flower, not a rose: something loose petaled and rich in bloom like a peony, but heavy with fragrance. The loose petals of it lay in Danny's flannel shirt pocket. He wondered idly whether Lorado, Jr., had opened the door of the wine-cellar yet.

He had liked Lorado, Jr. Lorado, Sr., was stout, and small-eyed, and unimpressionable. His son was tall, and slender, and most impressionable. Danny had strayed from his own outfit three weeks before in a joyous hour of aberration caused by multiplied glasses of Mexican wine; the small, thin glasses of dark-red

wine, which is nauseatingly sweet to the novice, until he has drunk many, and catches the vaguely bitter tang that lingers after one has swallowed.

Lorado, Jr., had supplied the wine from the cellar of his sire. It was a small, dark, stone cellar under the north end of the *patio*. You went down a few uneven steps to a small passageway, dim and cool, and rank with the smell of things underground. There were more steps at the end of the passage, and then the door. Lorado, Sr., trusted no man. It was the door of a treasure chamber, and he held the key, but Lorado, Jr., had laughed, and had led Danny, not along the dim, cool, passage way, but to the garden, and had shown him a half-buried window, sunk deep in the flowers and vines. It was a very narrow window. Neither Danny nor Lorado, Sr., could have passed through it, but the body of Lorado, Jr., slipped through, svelte and supple from long practice, and the bottles of sweet, dark red wine which he passed up were many and untold.

When Danny had awakened, he had found himself laid out comfortably in the shade at the north end of the little square *patio*, with Lorado, Jr., watching him in lazy, dreamy-eyed admiration, his cream-colored sombrero pulled low over his eyes, his cigaret unlighted between his fingers.

Danny had sat up, and taken inventory of himself. The past was a blank of delirious joy and the rushing of many waters.

"Anything doing, special, Lory?" he had asked, meditatively.

Lorado, Jr., had lighted his cigaret before replying.

"There is a man who may die by sunset. You had better go soon. If he dies—" Lorado shrugged his slim, expressive shoulders courteously. "It is but lately we have had law in Santa Juana, but now that we have it, we keep it. A sinner saved prays loudest. If the man should die, then it is better for you that you go now before he dies. And it is better for the girl, also."

"There was a girl?" Danny's tone was interestedly interrogative.

Lorado, Jr., nodded. His narrow, brown eyes were serene and dreamy.

Danny raised himself on one elbow.

"Dolores?"

"Dolores, *señor*."

The mist which had blurred the brilliancy of the sunshine cleared suddenly, and Danny stood erect. He began to remember things which had happened in Santa Juana before Lorado, Jr., had tapped the unnumbered treasures of his father's wine cellar.

"Where is she?"

"You were dancing with her," replied Lorado, calmly. "The man was an American also, Lispenard. He was very drunk, very much more drunk than you, *señor*, and he snatched the flower from Dolores' hair as she passed him. You shot at him over her shoulder—so, and kept on dancing."

"Where is she?" repeated Danny.

Lorado smiled, courteously, even pleasantly.

"The *señor* was already aware that Dolores and I am betrothed? Tomorrow we will marry."

"Lory, me boy," Danny's eyes were calm and menacing as they looked down at the slim, picturesque, figure beneath the shade of the cream sombrero, "tomorrow is the day that never comes. Also, Lory, you deceive yourself, and the truth is not in you. *Sabe?* Now, listen to your old uncle Bill. My pony's gone and I have n't got a cent left. You get a Dutch hustle on you and find me a pony before you talk of chasing me out of town, or I'll stay in Santa Juana till sunrise tomorrow, and assist at both the funeral and the wedding, and, Lory, boy, it won't be your wedding, and there's a slight possibility of a double funeral if you decide to press matters to a finish. I've owned bigger and better towns than Santa Juana for the time being."

Danny smiled back at the shadowy, violet mountain, and laid a caressing hand on the gray mule's hamper. As a proper vehicle for rapid transit, the gray mule lacked certain points of excellence, but for strength and endurance it ranked first among its kind in Santa Juana. After Lorado had departed from the *patio* to seek such a vehicle, Danny had wandered through the garden. And he had found his way back to the half-buried window of the wine cellar, the wine cellar of which

Lorado kept the key. He laughed up at the moonlight on the side of El Dorado, and wondered again whether the door had been unlocked as yet.

It had been easy, the taking leave of Santa Juana. None of its citizens impeded his progress. But as he rode forth on the gray mule's back, he had seen two figures watching him from the shadow of the fruit stall at the side of the market. One wore a cream sombrero, and the other the picturesque garb of the *rurale*, the frontier mounted police of Mexico.

Danny did not look back. He rode leisurely and comfortably out towards the Jalapa pass, and neither figure followed. At moonrise the gray mule returned, leisurely and comfortably, and had remained outside of the north end of the *patio* garden, while its rider entered and sought the half-buried window. The taste for the bitter-sweet red wine is a masterful longing.

At daybreak Danny had joined the traders in yellow-silk, and his way did not lead over the Jalapa pass.

They are a strange lot, the traders in yellow-silk. Danny watched them through half-closed lids, as they rested on the ledge of land overhanging the *arroyo*. There were eight mules and six men. Four of the men were Chinese, although they wore Mexican clothes. Each mule bore two packs, huge hampers of woven grass and hemp. You can see them all along the docks of the coast towns, waiting for the customs officers' overhauling. Generally they contain silk, yards and yards of silk from the land of the Dragon. Sometimes the contents vary. There is tea, spices, and fancy china, or strange toys. Sometimes there are other things. Hence the necessity for the overhauling.

Once, at Tepultuan, they found enough opium in the yellow-silk hampers to furnish pipe dreams to all Mexico. And more than once the fretful and active governments of the two nations had rebuked the *rurales* of the Jalapa pass and the border Madres, for having permitted the smuggling in of the mild Mongol himself in the guise of yellow-silk.

"'Tis a dangerous and a nefarious trade," said Danny, blithely, and he loos-

ened the top of the hamper on the gray mule, and raised it three inches to admit the air.

A bullet clipped neatly past his ear. He heard the singing of it, and being wise in the way of sudden things, he did not turn his head, nor exhibit any symptom of undue or vulgar curiosity.

Smoke curled in slowly widening circles from a ridge of rocks above the eagle palms. From the opposite side of the clearing, a puff of it showed grayly against the dark underbrush. The yellow-silk train was held at a disadvantage. Danny let the cover of the hamper drop, and waited. He did not believe in taking liberties with Providence.

From the underbrush, and behind the rocks, rode forth two *rurales*. Even in the moonlight they were picturesque. So was a cream-colored sombrero which showed back of one.

"Drop your weapons," ordered one *rurale*.

With the three remaining Chinese, and two white men, Danny obeyed, and sighed in the act. Lorado, Jr., had surely opened the door of the wine cellar. He rode slightly ahead of the *rurales*, and smiled down into Danny's face. It was not a pleasant smile. Danny wished he had not dropped his gun.

"That is the man," said Lorado; briefly. "He has killed *Señor* Lispenard, an American, and has abducted the *Señorita* Dolores Quesada of Santa Juana."

The larger and more picturesque of the *rurales* stared interestedly at Danny. Such criminality was rare when one was merely on the trail of yellow-silk. More, it was stimulating to the sense of duty one owed two fretful and active governments.

"And these?" He waved a hand at the others.

Lorado answered in Spanish. Danny called to his companions.

"He says you're a lot of Chink smugglers."

"*Señor*, I arrest you," began the large *rurale*, but Danny ignored him. Lorado was bending towards him from his saddle.

"If you will tell me where she is, I will save you."

"*Señor* Lory, I salute you," returned Danny, with a sweep of a Texan sombrero

at the cream-colored one. "It's a shame to put a hustler like you out of the business. Gentlemen, I'm no Chink smuggler. I'm Danny McCarter, Americano-Irisho, direct from the 'M. K.' ranch, forty-two miles to your right up on the Snake River. Lispenard's my partner. After I go on a stampede, Lispenard follows the trail to collect the pieces. In an affair over a flower, two gentlemen do not ask questions. Neither do they bear grudges. That's Lispenard to your left, *señors*, second white smuggler. You'll find him in fairly good health. In leaving Santa Juana suddenly, I longed for his company, and assisted him to escape from your too hospitable hospital."

Lorado, Jr., stared from the face of Danny to that of the second white smuggler to the left. It was the American, Lispenard. The two *rurales* gazed steadily at the pack-hampers and their faces were skeptical.

"As a mere matter of form, *señor*," said the smaller one, as he raised his revolver, "I venture to perforate your packs of silk, and we will waive all examination of contents. As a mere matter of official form—"

Danny stood rigidly beside his hamper, and watched the *rurale* deliberately shoot bullets through each of the other packs. It was a recent trick of official form. Once over on the Sonora line, they had found two dead Chinamen when the hampers were opened. It was a mere matter of form, but Danny's face went suddenly pale as the last bullet sang towards Lispenard's pack, and the *rurale* turned his horse about and took aim at the hamper beside the gray mule.

Instantly Danny's body shot over the mule and landed before the hamper, shielding it.

The *rurale* held him covered.

"An official examination of that pack shall be made," he stated. "If the *señor* stirs, I will shoot him dead."

The lips of Lorado, Jr., parted in an amused smile. He reached for paper and tobacco from the inner pocket of his silk-lined jacket, and started to roll a cigaret.

Danny's hands dipped to his boot tops. So did Lispenard's. They do not stop for an interchange of civilities at crucial mo-

ments in the Madres. There were three shots fired as one. The Mexican's horse did a capable side-step as one of Danny's bullets buzzed through its ear, and Danny's right hand fell limply to his side. He swore softly under his breath and pulled back the hammer of the other revolver with his teeth, as Lispenard sprang at the *rurale's* bridle.

Suddenly the lid of the gray mule's hamper was tilted back, and the head of Dolores appeared.

Lorado, Jr., lighted his cigaret with unsteady fingers. The *rurales* doffed their high-peaked hats and swept the *señorita* low bows, most apologetically. Lorado spoke, and his tone was gentle.

"We will escort the *Señorita* Quesada safely to her home."

"The *señorita* chooses for herself which way she goes," said Danny.

Lorado eyed him haughtily.

"The *señorita* will be my wife tomorrow."

"She can't," retorted Danny, joyously. "Because she's mine today. Lory, boy, did n't I tell you tomorrow's the day that never comes? Next time, you lock your treasures in the wine cellar, put a key on the garden window."

Lorado held out his arms to the slender, girlish figure standing upright in the hamper, one hand resting on Danny's shoulder, and his voice was full of tenderness.

"Dolores, *mia cariña*."

"Say it in United States, please," corrected Danny. "Mrs. Dan McCarter will do from you. We took the precaution to have it changed as we came through Los Oros. Is there any further matter of official form to detain this honeymoon train from moving towards the M. K. ranch?"

The *rurales* again swept bows to their horses' manes.

"We wish the *señor* joy."

"The *señor* thanks you like sixty-nine. Don't mention it."

Danny held out his left hand to his bride and helped her from the hamper.

"But," he added, "I don't mind telling you two official gentlemen, that you came mighty near spoiling the finest pack of yellow-silk that ever came over the Madres."

PARISIAN MODES by special arrangement REUTLINGER, PARIS



MAISON DAILLY

"Suzette" costume of flowered Pompadour muslin with ruffles of lace and girdle of white liberty silk.

PARISIAN MODES by special arrangement REUTLINGER, PARIS



MAISON NEY

Carriage costume with decorations of Cluny applique; the ribbon girdle matching the ribbon trimming on the bodice.

PARISIAN MODES by special arrangement REUTLINGER, PARIS



MAISON BÉCHOFF-DAVID

Princesse costume of black with embroidered cape jacket.

PARISIAN MODES by special arrangement REUTLINGER, PARIS



MAISON DRECOLL

Foulard costume, the waist and sleeves trimmed with valenciennes lace, the skirt at the bottom finished with a wide silk braid.

PARISIAN MODES by special arrangement REUTLINGER, PARIS



MAISON BÉCHOFF-DAVID

Semi-princesse costume. The bolero is worn close and carries three graduated half capes

PARISIAN MODES by special arrangement REUTLINGER, PARIS



MAISON MULOT

Costume of muslin with plaited ruffles of the same.



PHOTO BY OTTO SARONY CO.  
**The Pipes of Pan.**

## Some Dramas of the Day

BY ACTON DAVIES

"Peter-Panitis," that most extraordinary malady which became epidemic in New York last season owing to the charm of Miss Maude Adams' acting and the quaintness of Mr. J. M. Barrie's play, is very likely to spread into equal virulence throughout the country as soon as Mr. Charles Frohman's leading star starts upon her travels.

Therefore, now in these dog days, when to write up to such a title as "Some Dramas of the Day" becomes practically an impossibility, from the fact that all the leading metropolitan theaters are closed, it is worth while to contemplate from various points of view Mr. Barrie's play and its performance.

To begin with, it is still to be proved

that this country at large is going to wax as enthusiastic as New York did about it. Washington and Baltimore, the only cities where this play was acted before it came into New York were by no means enthusiastic about it. But that is scarcely a criticism, as Miss Adams would assure you herself, for these are the two cities which condemned "The Little Minister" outright on its original production and yet two years later, after its phenomenal metropolitan career, the playgoers of both these cities flocked to see it through several seasons, and they would crowd the theater again if Miss Adams were to announce it for revival tomorrow. So there you are! You pay your money and you take your choice of opinions.

This much we know. "Peter Pan," with its great London success behind it, was produced at the Empire. At the first performance Miss Adams scored a personal success as the hero which far outshone the play itself. A few of the more pronounced Barrie-ites among the reviewers declared it to be his masterpiece, and so forth, but the more general opinion seemed to be that, after a first act of exquisite fantasy, Mr. Barrie had dropped into mild extravaganza, and not the very best type of extravaganza at that. It was declared with even greater unanimity by the critics that Miss Adams was too fine an artist to waste her time and talents upon a rôle which, at its best, was little better than that of any Principal Boy in any pantomime.

So much for the critic's view of this situation! Now as to what the public thought of it. With very few exceptions the first nighters did not fancy "Peter Pan" at all. They bowed as they invariably do to the charm and fascination of Miss Adams' acting and personality, but after the first scene, the pirates, the Indians, and the general hogde podge features of the play bewildered quite as much as it bored them.

The audiences, during that first fortnight in New York, were large, but then they always are when Miss Adams presents a new bill. There was nothing in the size of them or in the way they accepted the play to indicate that "Peter Pan" was one of those successes which was going to keep playgoers tumbling into a theater for a whole season. With that disastrous three weeks' run which had befallen Mr. Barrie's other fantastic play, "Little Mary," at this same theater a year or so before, Manager Frohman and Miss Adams must have done a lot of thinking

during that first month of "Peter Pan."

Mr. Frohman had always been most sanguine about its fate: he never doubted that it would score a popular triumph. To him it was one of those particular stage pets that he would rather lose a great deal of money on than not produce at all. Miss Adams, though she dearly loved the part and play, and has since declared that she would rather play *Peter* than any other rôle in her large repertoire, was by no means so confident. But it was the children who finally set both their minds at rest and gave "Peter Pan" its hall mark of great and lasting popularity. Now and then, during that first month, you might see an empty seat at an evening performance, but at the matinées on Wednesday and Saturday, even breathing room was a premium. The youngsters flocked to it in droves, and their enthusiastic accounts of *Peter* and his adventures proved to be the very finest sort of an advertisement that any play could possibly have.

Like the circus, the older folk began to excuse themselves for going to "Peter Pan" on the score that the youngsters insisted upon taking them there. And once having seen the play, a very large majority of them began to be enthusiastic on their own account. Those who did n't like "Peter Pan" did the play even greater service, if possible. Their perfectly frank statements, that they had never been so bored to death by a stage production was sure to be heard sooner or later by some other member of the family, who was equally emphatic in declaring that "Peter Pan" was indeed an exception, the daintiest, most ethereal, and delightful play that they had ever set their eyes on. The result, of course, was a family row; and



PHOTO BY OTTO BARONY CO.

The Little Napoleon.

any manager will tell you that once you get families or friends fighting about the merits or demerits of a play, that manager who is lucky enough to own it has got a huge success on his hands.

Pan's" behalf quite beggars description. The result is that Miss Adams and "Peter Pan" will return to the Empire for a short season in October, then go *en tour* to make way for a new attraction already



PHOTO BY OTTO BARONY CO.

A Fairy Daniel Boone.

Naturally, each of the disputants, had to visit the play again, to prove how totally wrong the other person had been in everything he had said. Generally, each of them would take several of his own friends along with him so that his own estimate of the play might be fully endorsed, and when these friends happened to be small nephews or nieces just home for the holidays, the "tooting" which went on on "Peter

booked there, and subsequently return about Christmas to give the play another holiday run.

Of course, nearly every body knows that Mr. Barrie took the main idea of his plot from that delightful book of his, "The Little White Bird." Like Ouida, Rudyard Kipling, and that other wonderful writer of child life stories, Kenneth Grahame, the author of "The Golden Age,"



PHOTO BY OTTO BARONY CO.

Maude Adams as Peter Pan.

Barrie has always been exceptionally successful in his drawings of children's character. "Peter Pan, the Boy Who Would n't Grow Up," must certainly rank as one of his finest creations. On the play bills Mr. Barrie shares the honors of authorship with a little seven year old girl whom he declares had far more to do in his creation of "Peter Pan" than he did himself.

But somewhere, back of the minds of either the child or the man, there must have been lurking some memory of an old family legend, for the other day, in reading a manuscript copy of "The Blue Bird," the new fairy play by Maurice Maeterlinck, I was amazed at the similarity in a hundred different ways to the story of "Peter Pan." That either of these authors had cribbed from the other is absurd and ridiculous, for Maeterlinck has been at work on this play for the last five years, at least, and Mr. Barrie's play was finished two years and a half ago. As plays these are as wide apart as the poles, but each

man undoubtedly has, consciously or unconsciously absorbed some part of an old legend and woven it into the back-ground of his story.

It may have dawned on the reader by this time, that in all these remarks that I have been making about "Peter Pan" I have n't given even the faintest synopsis of its plot. I have n't, and for a very good reason. To tell you the honest truth, it has been my fate to sit through so many bad plays since that first night when I saw "Peter Pan" for the only time, that with all those other plots and counterplots whizzing around in my head I could n't give you a clear, correct, or concise account of Peter Pan's story to save my life. Here where I am writing in the foot hills of the Berkshires, the awful realization has just come to me that my scrap book, in which the doings of *Peter* and his comrades are fully described, is two hundred miles away and there's no possibility of its reaching me until long after this article is on its way to press. If it were a Pinero play, a Shake-



PHOTO BY HALL

**Peter Pan tells Wendy the fairy tale.**

spearian tragedy, or even one of those dreary musical shows, which put the average dramatic critic to sleep long before the tenor and the prima donna have finished responding to their first encore which I had been asked to describe, I would rush into the breach without flinching. But it is different with a play like "Peter Pan." Every child that has ever seen it, to say nothing of Miss Adams or Mr. Barrie, would naturally rise up and belay me if I failed to do their favorite hero proper treatment in THE RED BOOK. And then, too, my editor's orders were so unmistakable. The entire "P. S." of his letter, which I have beside me, ran: "And be sure to give us the plot."

The first act I feel quite equal to. That was the part of the play which charmed me most. Just as the three little *Darlings* are being tucked away in their beds by their parents and Laurie, their big St. Bernard pal, is stretching herself out for a long night's sleep, *Peter Pan*, the "Boy Who Won't Grow Up," flies in at the window. He is a fairy, of course, so there's nothing wonderful about his being able to fly. He introduces himself to *Wendy*, the eldest of the *Darling* children, saying he has lost his shadow, and asks her if she happens to have seen it lying about anywhere. Between *Peter* and *Wendy*, of course, it is a case of love at first sight, and when *Wendy* opens a bureau drawer and produces his shadow which she had picked up on the window sill *Peter*, even if he had n't already fallen in love with her would certainly have been her friend for life. In order to save him from losing his shadow *Wendy* volunteers to sew it on

for him, and while this very interesting operation is going on *Peter* tells *Wendy* the story of his life. It's a much happier tale than most heroes tell on the stage, and it completely entrances *Wendy*; so when the other two little *Darlings* have heard his thrilling accounts of life in the tree tops and *Peter* volunteers to make them all fairies *pro tem* the entire *Darling* brood accepts his invitation unanimously and the act ends with them all flying out of the window *en route* for the tree tops.

But I was almost forgetting *Tinker Bell!* *Tinker Bell* is *Peter's* fairy sweetheart, and she keeps very close tab on him, indeed. As a matter of fact she is as near an approach to the conventional stage Adventuress or Injured Lady as there is in this unique play. The *Darling* children, of course, while they are getting so thick with *Peter* have n't the slightest idea that they are getting on *Tinker Bell's* nerves and are rending her fairy heart strings in the most

harrowing manner. In the play, *Tinker Bell* is entirely invisible to the children, but she is represented to her audience by a tiny little light which follows *Peter* everywhere. And by the way that light dances up and down in a frenzy while *Wendy* and *Peter* are chatting, it is quite easy to realize that in the nature of jealousy, at all events, *Tinker Bell* is a true woman. From the way she flew after *Peter* when he elopes with his new friends it is equally apparent that the wrath of *Tinker Bell* is going to descend on the *Darling* youngsters long before they get out of the woods. So far so good!

The rest of the play to me, now that I



PHOTO BY OTTO SARONY CO.

Maude Adams.



PHOTO BY HALL

Mr. and Mrs. Darling the Darling Children, and the Darling Dog.

try to remember it eight months later, is a wild fantastic blur of Indians, pirates, wolves, and things. To describe it accurately and historically was so far beyond me, that an hour or so ago, when I heard that one of the actresses who had played in "Peter Pan" was spending her holidays right here in this village, I hastened to call on her and see if I could n't wring something like an accurate synopsis from her lips.

This is what happened: I mention the incident, merely for publication and not at all as an evidence of good faith. The actress was out. That was my first black eye. She had gone to Greenfield to spend the day. Her sister was at home: would she do?

"Certainly," said I.

By all means let me see the sister. Even if she was n't in "Peter Pan" herself she must have gone to the theater often to see her sister act.

My troubles were dissolved into thin air. Sister came, we said "How d'y do," and I explained the situation. But once more my hopes were dashed.

"I'm awfully sorry," laughed the young woman, "but I never saw the play."

"You mean to tell me that you never went to see your sister act," I asked almost indignantly.

"Well, you see, the play was such a great success and the houses were so crowded that Margaret could n't get me any passes, and I have been too long on the stage to give up my own money to see the best play that was ever written. But I'll tell you what you might do, though. I'll give you my sister's telephone number in Greenfield. She can tell you all you want to know in a minute."

I did n't walk to that telephone. I almost flew *a la* Peter Pan. In five minutes I had the actress on the wire and the situation explained.

"I'd dearly love to oblige you," said a very charming voice, "but, upon my word, I never saw the play in my life."

"What! Did n't you play in it for two hundred and forty nights at the Empire?" I cried.

"Yes," and this time I was sure I heard laughter. "But, you see, I was only one of the Indians who sit on the roof of the cabin in the second act. It was a worthless part. Mr. Frohman ought to star me in "Camille" next year just to make up for giving me such a thinking rôle. Only six lines to speak, mind you! And I was always at home in bed every night by half past ten because I only acted in two scenes. But what it was all about I could n't tell you, except in a general

way, for Mr. Frohman never lets us sit in front at rehearsals."

Foiled and disheartened I was turning away from the telephone, when close behind me I heard the familiar voice of the greatest nurse who ever tried ineffectually to put a reluctant Juliet to bed saying laughingly:

"Did I hear you asking somebody over the long distance phone to tell you the plot of 'Peter Pan'?"

It was my old friend, that youngest and yet most veteran of actresses, Mrs. Sol Smith. In another minute she was in her rocking chair and I was sitting beside her on the grass.

"Why did n't you come to me at once," laughed the oldest actress but one on the American stage.

"Did I see 'Peter Pan'?" Why, of course I did. In fact, I think I am *Peter Pan*, or at all events, his sister. Even my old friend, Mrs. N. D. Jones, the only actress on the stage now who is older than I am, always calls me the 'Girl Who Would Never Grow Up.' And, mind you, I don't blame her, for when you remember, as, of course you don't, that I was a married woman at 15 and had had three sets of twins, four boys and two girls, before I was nineteen, and have supported all the leading stars of my day and generation, and never had a word of dissension with any one of them

except Mr. Mansfield, I think that even you, as a dramatic critic, must concede that now, when I'm up here at Althol preparing to celebrate my seventy-sixth birthday, there is a very strong strain of *Peter Pan* in my nature.

And there the great old lady of the stage told me stories of both the Booths—Wilkes and Edwin, of Charlotte Cushman, and of John McCullough, until, in her description of that most wonderful of all *Juliet*s, Adelaide Neilson, both she and I for the moment forgot all about poor *Peter Pan*. Later, however, though I found that her knowledge of the plot of the later acts was almost as hazy as my own, her enthusiasm for the play and Miss Adams' performance of the title rôle excelled mine altogether.

After all, perhaps, it's just as well I have n't been able to remember more of the story. In the first place, I could n't do it justice, and in the second, there is no type of nuisance in a theater who earns the wrath and anathemas of so many persons in the audience as the man, woman, or friend who sits behind you and insists upon blaring out every thing that is going to happen in the next scene. A dramatic critic at all times, heaven knows, has enough crime to be held accountable for, so for once and for very obvious reasons I refuse to write any more of the story of "Peter Pan."



PHOTO BY HALL

Peter Pan on the pirate ship.